

SPEECH BY: DATO' SERI DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD  
( PRIME MINISTER )

EVENT: AT THE BANQUET GIVEN IN HIS HONOUR BY H.E. LT.GEN.H.M.  
ERSHAD OF BANGLADESH

VENUE: NANDAY, BANGLADESH.

DATE: 18 APR 1983

TIME:

Your Excellency Lt. Gen. H. M. Ershad,  
Begun Ershad,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of my wife and members of my delegation, I would like to thank you, the Government and People of Bangladesh for the warm and friendly welcome that has been extended to us since our arrival here.

2. Our two countries have always enjoyed close and cordial relations since we established diplomatic relations in April 1972. The close relations that exist between Bangladesh and Malaysia are reflected in the cooperation between our two countries in the social, cultural, economic, educational and technical fields. Exchanges of visit at various levels from time to time have served to strengthen relations further.

Your Excellency,

3. The ties between our two countries are founded on age-old cultural contacts, common experience and geographical proximity. These ties have been further augmented by our shared commitments to the ideals and aspirations of the United Nations, the Organisation of Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Commonwealth in all of which both our countries are members. The similarity of views that we hold on many regional and international issues have inevitably drawn us closer together. It is the Malaysian Government's intention not only to maintain the close ties existing between us but also to continue to work towards strengthening our relations further.

Your Excellency,

4. Malaysia has always followed a consistent policy of establishing friendly relations and mutual cooperation with all countries irrespective of ideology or political systems, based on the principles of territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs. We believe that adherence to those principles, as well as the principle of peaceful co-existence is vital, if we, particularly the

weaker nations, are to enjoy peace, security and stability, which are so essential for the economic development, prosperity and well being of our peoples.

5. We have followed closely developments in Bangladesh and are greatly impressed by the serious efforts made by your Government to bring progress and prosperity to your people and to achieve sustained economic growth. Like you, we too are committed to improve the quality of life of our people and lay a firm foundation for continued stability and socio-economic security for the future.

6. We note with admiration the bold initiative taken by your country to promote a regional framework for cooperation in South Asia. We understand that substantial progress has been achieved towards this end and we wish you and the friendly nations of South Asia every success in this worthy endeavour.

7. Like Bangladesh, Malaysia is deeply committed to regional cooperation manifested by ASEAN. But ASEAN and the countries in the region can fully concentrate on their social and economic development efforts only if there is an early return of peaceful and stable conditions to Southeast Asia. It is for this reason that Malaysia, in concert with its partners in ASEAN have been striving to establish in Southeast Asia a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, free from any form or manner of foreign interference. The Kampuchean problem is a serious threat to peace and stability in the region and the continued Vietnamese illegal occupation of the country is a serious obstacle to the realisation of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality in Southeast Asia. We cannot and will not accept foreign military intervention in Kampuchea or elsewhere as a means of settling disputes. The Kampuchean issue must be resolved quickly and in accordance with the Declaration of the International Conference on Kampuchea and other relevant UN resolutions that have been endorsed and supported by the International Community. Malaysia believes that the Government of Democratic Kampuchea under the Presidency of Prince Norodom Sihanouk deserves full international support in its gallant efforts to secure an independent and neutral Kampuchea. Bangladesh's staunch support in this regard and for the concept of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality in Southeast Asia is sincerely felt and deeply appreciated.

8. Malaysia deplores strongly the on-going Vietnamese attacks against forces of the Democratic Republic of Kampuchea and the helpless Khmer civilian population. We strongly condemn Vietnamese transgression of Thai territory and casualties inflicted on Thai forces and civilians. This has occurred in the past and we fear that this will continue to happen as long as the Vietnamese continue their illegal occupation of Kampuchea. As we have repeatedly emphasised in the past, Vietnamese military actions along the Thai-Kampuchean border threaten a spill-over of fighting into neighbouring Thailand and raise a spectre of war in the

region and invite big power involvement. We, therefore, call on the international community to demand that the Vietnamese immediately cease their hostilities along the border and withdraw their forces from Kampuchea.

9. Like Kampuchea, Afghanistan too is the victim of foreign intervention and occupation. We deplore this situation and fully support the resolutions of the OIC, the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations for the restoration of the independence and sovereignty of Afghanistan and of its Islamic and non-aligned character. Your Excellency,

10. As Muslim countries we cannot but share the anguish of our brethren in West Asia. The repeated and blatant acts of aggression committed by Israel against the Arab people and their lands threaten regional security and world peace. We believe that a just and durable peace in the region can only be established on the basis of the restitution of the rights of the people of Palestine, including their right to set up an independent state of their own in their homeland under the leadership of their sole and legitimate representative, the PLO; the total Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories; and the unconditional return of Holy Jerusalem to Arab and Islamic sovereignty. We welcome the Eight-Point Declaration on the Middle-East peace settlement adopted at the Arab Summit in Fez in September, 1982.

11. Several months after the Israeli rape of Lebanon, they remain in occupation of parts of that country against the wishes of the people and government of Lebanon and the international community. It is about time that the United States Government, the supplier of arms to Israel and on whose economic support Israel depends, apply the necessary pressure to effect immediate Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.

12. Our anguish is deepened by the continuing war between Iran and Iraq. The conflict between two brotherly countries not only endangers peace and stability but also undermines the solidarity of the Islamic countries, particularly in respect of the just struggle of the Palestinian people, the liberation of Holy Jerusalem and the valiant struggle of our Afghan Muslim brothers to preserve their faith, dignity and independence against Soviet intervention and occupation. We pledge our support to the peace efforts of the OIC for an early, just and durable solution of the conflict in the higher interest of Islam and for the stability and progress of the Islamic Ummah.

13. As members of the Non-Aligned Movement, we share a common responsibility in ensuring that it will always maintain its independence, "non-bloc" character and that it remains dedicated to its original principles. These characteristics are essential if the Movement is to continue to make meaningful contributions towards promoting international peace and security. We are heartened that the

Non-Aligned Summit in New Delhi has seen renewed awareness of this reality.

Your Excellency,

14. Today all developing countries alike are confronted with an economic predicament that can only be described as desperate, some more desperate than others. Rising trade deficits, high cost of borrowing and decline in development assistance are only some of our problems. All this cannot be redressed in isolation, nor can it await a global consensus, on the creation of the New International Economic Order. We in the developing world must explore with the utmost urgency new patterns of cooperation among ourselves in the spirit of South-South dialogue and strengthen our bargaining position vis-a-vis the developed countries through the promotion of producers' associations, such as the recently established Tin Producers' Association.

15. Malaysia is undergoing a fairly rapid rate of development and modernisation. While we need the cooperation of the advanced countries to boost our economic growth, we also place considerable emphasis on self-reliance. We in Malaysia have done our utmost to get away from subsistence agriculture and the production of raw materials for the developed world and to move towards a diversified industry-based economy. While we are as yet slightly developed than some other developing countries, we have nevertheless, through the passage of time, accumulated a wealth of experience which we are willing to share with other countries which are desirous of similar development. Only by helping each other in the spirit of South-South cooperation, and growing economically strong can we expect to gain the respect and have equitable relations with the developed world. I would like to reiterate here our willingness to work with Bangladesh in all fields and to nurture the spirit of friendship and cooperation that has always been the cornerstone of our relationship. The Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme established in 1980 is now fully developed and I hope that Bangladesh will be one of the countries which will avail itself of this facilities that are now open. At the same time, we on our part would always welcome any assistance that you could offer us. In this regard, I would like to express our gratitude to you for extending to us the services of your doctors and other professionals, and offering us your academic and training facilities.

16. Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now ask you to join me in a toast to the good health and happiness of His Excellency Lt. Gen. H. M. Ershad and Begum Ershad, to the Government and people of Bangladesh, and to the close and enduring friendship between the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh and Malaysia.