

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

EVENT: AT THE BANQUET GIVEN IN HIS HONOUR BY H.E. MR. MAUMOON
ABDUL GAYOOM PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

VENUE: MALDIVES

DATE: 24 APR 1983

TIME:

Your Excellency President Maumoon Abdul
Gayoom and Madam Gayoom;
Honourable Ministers;
Excellencies;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

May I say, at the outset, how happy and honoured my
wife and I are to be in the Republic of Maldives at Your
Excellency's kind invitation. This is our first visit to
your beautiful country and yet in the short time that we
have been here, we have been made to feel so much at home by
the warm and friendly welcome extended to us. On behalf of
my wife and members of my delegation, I would like to thank
Your Excellency, the Government and people of Maldives for
the generous hospitality and the excellent facilities
accorded to us. I thank you also for the kind remarks which
you have just made.

Your Excellency,

2. It is a great pleasure to meet you again, this time in
your home country. I recall the number of occasions we had
met at various international conferences. We had the honour
and pleasure of welcoming Your Excellency for an official
visit to Malaysia in 1981 and since then we had met at the
Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting in Suva,
Fiji last September, and more recently at the Non-Aligned
Summit Conference in New Delhi. These exchanges and
contacts have been very useful, and indeed the personal
rapport that we have established has helped to bring our
countries closer together, after years of warm and cordial
relationship. Malaysia and Maldives share many common
aspirations and this is not only because of our strong
Islamic links and our firm commitment to the principles of
non-alignment but also because we share a common desire to
work together.

3. I am happy that my visit here will provide the
opportunity not only to strengthen these close ties of
friendship between us but also to see how we can further
enlarge the areas of cooperation in all fields for the
long-term benefit of our two countries. Our meeting this
afternoon in this regard has been most fruitful. In the

bilateral context, we are agreeable to look into the possibility of increasing trade and investment between our two countries.

4. We share also a common desire to increase our cooperation in the technical and economic fields and to encourage more exchanges between our peoples. In so far as technical cooperation is concerned, my Government believes that there are certain areas where we may be of assistance to your development efforts. I am happy to announce that the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme is now fully developed and Maldives is most welcome to avail itself of the training and other facilities that the programme offers. We want to share our experience and know-how with you and we do so in the belief that it is only through meaningful cooperation within the context of the South-South dialogue among developing countries that we can lessen our dependence on the developed countries and at the same time build up our national resilience. I am happy that your Government has responded positively to our offer.

Your Excellency,

5. Both Maldives and Malaysia share the same commitment to accelerate the economic development of our countries and to bring greater social and economic benefits to our peoples. But we are greatly hampered in our efforts by the deteriorating world economic situation. Indeed, the prospect of a world economic recovery hinges very much on resolute action by the developed countries to change their shortsighted policies and practices and bring order back to the world economy. The recession has affected almost all countries badly, more so the developing countries and many, particularly those without resources, are tottering under the impact of protectionism, deliberate obstruction to free trade, wild exchange rates, manipulated commodity prices and high interests on loans. Yet they have to shoulder the burden of vast development expenditure that is beyond their means in order to sustain credible growth rates and improve the quality of life of their peoples. It is not possible to go on indefinitely like this. We hope that the industrialised countries would reverse their trade policies and join in a bold and concerted effort to formulate a new regime for international trade and finance to replace the anarchy that now prevails. The rich developed countries must realise that they have as much to lose from an impoverished world as the developing countries. In the meantime, Malaysia believes that developing countries should cooperate with one another and encourage the formation of producers associations and regional groupings so that we could get fairer and better deal for our products. It is with this in mind that Malaysia has spearheaded the formation of the Tin Producers Association, dedicated not to cartelization in the tin trade but to fair prices for consumers as much as for producers.

6. In foreign policy, Maldives and Malaysia stand on

common ground. We are both members of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement and you have become a special member of the Commonwealth. Our two countries follow a policy of strict non-alignment. In this age of increasing big-power rivalry and wasteful and dangerous arms build-up, it is particularly important for non-aligned nations to uphold the principles and objectives of non-alignment and ensure its viability so that smaller nations of the world could live in the comfort of their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence and would not be transgressed and their dignity subverted. Many of the problems and conflicts that we see today arise from the blatant violation of these principles.

7. In Southeast Asia, Vietnamese forces continue to occupy Kampuchea in complete disregard of the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and of non-alignment. Yet there are many who would choose to ignore this blatant crime. What is worse is that Vietnamese military operations along the border, apart from inflicting casualties and hardship to helpless Khmer civilians, have often involved incursions into Thai territory and hence threatening to escalate the conflict and invite big-power involvement. We have condemned the on-going Vietnamese military actions and we would like to call on the international community to urge the Vietnamese to immediately cease their hostilities, withdraw their forces from Kampuchea and allow the Kampuchean people to determine their own destiny in accordance with the declaration of the ICK and relevant UN resolutions. It is only through a political solution that peace and stability could be restored in Southeast Asia. Malaysia and its ASEAN partners believe that the formation of the UN recognised Government of Democratic Kampuchea, headed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, a founder member of the Non-Aligned Movement, is a positive step towards the peaceful solution to the Kampuchean problem.

8. Just as the question of peace and security is important to us in Southeast Asia, it is also equally vital to your dispersed island country which is strategically located in the Indian Ocean. We, therefore, share your concern that urgent steps should be taken to convene the United Nations Conference on the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace so that the region would be free of big power rivalry and that countries in and around the Indian Ocean can live in peace.

9. Like you, we too hope to establish a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality in Southeast Asia, but ZOPFAN, as we call it, could only be realised if we first have a political settlement to the Kampuchean problem. We see the Zone of Peace in the Indian Ocean and ZOPFAN as being complementary to each other and I would like to express the appreciation of my Government for the support that your Government has given for our efforts to bring about the realisation of this conflict-free Zone in Southeast Asia.

10. As in the case of Kampuchea, Afghanistan too is the victim of foreign intervention and occupation. We strongly condemn the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and fully support the resolutions of the OIC, the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations, calling for the restoration of the independence and sovereignty of Afghanistan and of its Islamic and non-aligned character.

Your Excellency,

11. As fellow members of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, we cannot but share the anguish of our brethren in West Asia. With the support of a super-power, Israel continues to act like a bully and the stronger it gets militarily, the greater will be the threat it poses to neighbouring Arab countries and world peace. The Israeli involvement in the atrocities at Sabra and Shatila and their refusal to withdraw their occupying forces from Lebanon against the wishes of the international community and its own mentor, have made it more urgent for a solution to be found to the West Asian problem. Malaysia believes that a just and durable peace in the region can only be realised on the basis of the restitution of the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish 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 Fez Declaration of September 1982 as a significant step-forward in the search for a peaceful settlement of the West Asian problem.

12. We are sad at 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 struggle of the Palestinian people and liberation of the Holy Jerusalem. To aggravate matters we now have the massive oil spill that has already destroyed marine life, interfered with the supply of desalinated water for millions of people and polluted the shores of the Gulf. That oil spill, if it is not stopped, will pass through the Straits of Hormuz, to damage the livelihood of more countries. Given sufficient time and quantity even the Maldives will not be spared. Indeed, patches of oil floating across oceans are likely to wash ashore in many lands quite remote from the Gulf.

13. The settlement or cessation of the conflict between our Muslim brothers in Iran and Iraq has now become very urgent indeed. Malaysia would like to appeal to the combatants as well as to the OIC to renew efforts towards a settlement. May Allah guide us in our endeavour. This war is sapping our strength and undermining Muslim unity.

Your Excellency,

14. May I once again thank you for your kind invitation and for this splendid dinner. I look forward indeed to a fruitful and enjoyable stay in your beautiful country.

15. May I now invite Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen to join me in a toast to the continued success and well-being of His Excellency President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and Madam Gayoom, for the continued progress and prosperity of the Republic of Maldives, and the friendship between our two Governments and peoples.