

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

EVENT: THE OFFICIAL DINNER HOSTED IN HONOUR OF HIS EXCELLENCY
KAARE WILLOCH PRIME MINISTER OF NORWAY

VENUE: SRI PERDANA

DATE: 13 JAN 1986

TIME:

Your Excellency Mr. Kaare Willoch,
Prime Minister of Norway;
Madame Willoch;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is with great pleasure that I, on behalf of the Government and people of Malaysia, welcome Your Excellency, Madame Willoch and the distinguished members of your delegation to Malaysia. Your visit to Malaysia is most timely as it affords us the opportunity to continue the useful and extensive discussions we had had in Oslo in April, 1985. Indeed your visit is a manifestation of your Government's desire to further strengthen our bilateral relations and expand the scope of cooperation between our two countries.

2. Earlier in the day we had the opportunity to have a fruitful exchange of views on bilateral matters as well as on regional and international issues of mutual concern. I am convinced that there is tremendous scope for the expansion of our bilateral relations particularly in the fields of trade, investment and economic cooperation and have no doubt that your visit will contribute much towards this end. I am happy to note that we share similar views and perceptions on a number of international issues and fully appreciate each other's points of view on the others.

3. Relations between Malaysia and Norway have grown steadily in a very short span of time, founded as they are on our commitment to the free enterprise system, our pursuit of close regional cooperation in our respective regions and our abiding faith in, and commitment to, the ideals and aspirations of the United Nations.

4. There have been a number of high-level exchange of visits between our two countries in the past two years. I am glad to say that the relations between Malaysia and Norway have been on the upswing since my visit to Oslo last year. The signing of the agreement for the parallel financing by Norway of two mini-hydro projects in the States of Kedah and Selangor is yet another milestone in our bilateral relations.

5. The current level of bilateral trade, which has been almost consistently in favour of Norway, holds considerable scope for further expansion. Malaysia's abundant natural resources and her liberal investment climate should provide an added incentive to Norwegian investors. We are situated in a high growth region where there is a lot of potential for joint collaboration targetted at the ASEAN and other South-east Asian markets. We have pursued an economic diversification policy from the very early days of our independence, for we learnt that over-dependence on commodities not only hampered economic growth but also produced an erratic economic development. Hence, our determined pursuit of a broader industrial base which calls for a reservoir of skilled manpower and access to advanced technology.

6. Much of our efforts to ensure fair prices for our primary commodities, of which Malaysia produces a variety, and our manufactured goods are frustrated by tariffs, quotas and other barriers that hamper international trade. We appreciate Norway's institution of duty-free access for most manufactured products from the developing countries. We support all efforts aimed at progressive dismantling of trade barriers.

7. Malaysia, like Norway, plays an active role in the effort to develop close regional cooperation with her immediate neighbours. Our partners in the Association of South East Asian Nations or ASEAN share a common goal in our efforts to achieve economic development and assure the continued prosperity of our peoples. Similarly, within your own region, Nordic cooperation is an active vehicle for close relations between the Governments and private enterprises across national borders. We note the many facets of your cooperation that has evolved over several years. Such cooperation as Norway and her Nordic partners have achieved, provides a valuable example for other countries and regions to emulate and will contribute much towards regional stability and resilience.

Your Excellency.

8. Malaysia has for some time now addressed itself to the menace of drug abuse. The drug problem is a matter which Malaysia views with utmost concern. As you are aware, there is a growing world-wide awareness of the escalating dangers and multi-dimensional nature of the drug problem that poses a threat not only to the social fabric of societies but also the sovereignty and security of states. Malaysia has remained in the forefront of international and regional efforts in combatting this problem by working closely within the framework of the United Nations and directly with other countries. In our view, the problem cannot be tackled effectively unless the political will and awareness are galvanised at a higher level and resources are fully

mobilised for a more serious and concerted campaign against drug abuse. In this respect, Malaysia is appreciative of the various fresh initiatives being undertaken at the international level, notably the convening of the World Conference on Drug scheduled in 1987 in Vienna. It is hoped that the Conference will culminate in a global undertaking in the form of an integrated multi-disciplinary programme of action to which all parties concerned could be equally committed so that the problem can be more effectively tackled as to create the necessary impact and result. To this end, Malaysia will work with all countries concerned so as to ensure that the objectives of the Conference are achieved.

9. Notwithstanding our preoccupation with peace and security in South East Asia, Malaysia is equally aware of the importance to Norway of detente and stability in Europe. We have followed with interest various developments pertaining to security and arms reduction in that part of the world. We also note Norway's active role on the question of arms reduction and are of the view that the issue is of vital concern to the whole world and not just to the super powers alone. In this regard, small countries like Malaysia and Norway can play a positive role in our respective regions for the creation of a conducive atmosphere towards realising a general and comprehensive disarmament.

Your Excellency.

10. I am confident that your visit will contribute towards further strengthening the existing ties of friendship and cooperation and fostering greater goodwill and understanding between our two countries.

11. I would like once again to express our pleasure in welcoming you and Madame Willoch to Malaysia and I hope that your stay in this country will be both enjoyable and memorable.

12. Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, may I invite you all to rise and join me in a toast to the good health of His Excellency the Prime Minister of Norway and Madame Willoch and to the good relations between our two countries.