

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

EVENT: THE DINNER HOSTED IN HONOUR OF HIS EXCELLENCY U MAUNG MAUNG KHA,  
PRIME MINISTER OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF BURMA

VENUE: SRI PERDANA

DATE: 04 JUL 1987

TIME:

Your Excellency U Maung Maung Kha,  
Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic  
of the Union of Burma;  
Your Excellencies;  
Distinguished Guests;  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome Your Excellency and members of your delegation to Malaysia. Indeed, Your Excellency is no stranger to Malaysia, having visited us privately once before in 1961. Your Excellency's visit is therefore not only timely but is of great significance to Malaysia as this is the first high level visit from Burma after a lapse of almost thirteen years. We are greatly honoured by your visit as we regard it as a manifestation of your Government's desire to further strengthen the long established relations and to expand the scope of cooperation between our two countries. Let me take this opportunity to reiterate our readiness to reciprocate this desire in full measure. Burma is a close and special friend. Malaysia always has close and abiding interest in Burma and the Burmese people. Many years and events have we both experienced, our respective countries undergoing various challenges. Yet we have lost neither our entity nor resilience.

Your Excellency,

2. I am happy to note that there is fairly significant economic and technical cooperation between our two countries. In this respect, Malaysia highly values the services of Burmese doctors and specialists who have served and are still serving in Malaysia through the generous understanding of the Burmese government. For our part, Malaysian agencies are continuing to extend training facilities to Burmese officials in various fields. Let me assure Your Excellency that the Malaysian government is willing to consider whatever assistance that is within our means that the Burmese Government may require in fields where Malaysia has gained some expertise.

3. It is also gratifying to note that there are increasing

people to people contacts which I am sure will contribute towards closer bilateral relations. Both our countries have also in the past exchanged cultural troupes and sport teams. It is my earnest desire that we should not only renew the socio-cultural contacts but also intensify them.

4. Certainly, Your Excellency would agree with me that our two countries have mutually benefitted from our close collaboration. This state of affairs is possible because of goodwill and understanding between our leaders. The time has now come for us to endeavour to build on the existing goodwill and understanding to expand further the scope of cooperation. In this respect, I am convinced there are great prospects ahead. Our economic relations, though insignificant, could be further expanded. It is therefore necessary for us to find ways and means of cooperating more effectively in promoting trade and economic interaction. The intensification of exchange of trade delegations and the holding of exhibitions would contribute towards greater awareness of each others products and technology as well as capability. I am convinced that given the necessary governmental encouragement, both the national enterprises in Burma and the private sector in Malaysia could seize the opportunities available in the fields of trade and joint venture investment.

Your Excellency,

5. Malaysia and Burma are relatively small countries which firmly believe in establishing friendly relations and cooperation among countries in the region. The Malaysian Government's support for ASEAN as a viable economic organization is a testimony of Malaysia's commitment towards regional cooperation.

6. Countries in the South East Asian region like anywhere else require an environment of peace and stability in order to fully devote their efforts to socio-economic development. However the prevailing situation in Kampuchea poses a threat to peace and stability in our region and represents a retrogressive step in our efforts towards peaceful collaboration among all states in the region irrespective of political ideology. It is a matter of serious concern to us that the people in Kampuchea are still experiencing foreign military occupation and domination. They continue to be denied their right of self determination.

Your Excellency,

7. Today, all developing countries alike, are confronted with an economic predicament. All of us have to cope with the problems of high interest rates, high level foreign debts, the continuing trend towards protectionism and falling prices of primary commodities. All these cannot be redressed in isolation, nor could it await a global consensus for the creation of a new international economic

order. The lack of commitment on the part of the developed countries to see these problems in their proper perspective have contributed towards the prolongation of the economic issues. It is therefore imperative that the developing countries themselves should take the initiative to promote greater cooperation among ourselves. In this regard Malaysia has not only strived to generate the necessary momentum for a greater South-South Cooperation through the formation of a South-South Commission but through our limited resources has extended technical and other assistance to other developing countries through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme.

8. Another issue that concerns us all, relates to the problem of drug abuse and illicit trafficking. The magnitude of this problem has caused serious global concern since it has spread over a wide geographical area with increasingly devastating effects on individuals as well as societies. In this respect, it is gratifying that a fresh beginning has been made in the war against illicit drugs. The recently concluded International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (ICDAIT), was able to adopt a comprehensive programme action to combat the drug abuse and trafficking. I am convinced that the drug abuse problem can be eradicated if all nations show the necessary political will. Probably towards this end, both our countries should lead the way in implementing the ICDAIT declaration. In this connection, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Burma not only for supporting my candidature but also for the constructive contribution of the Burmese delegation during the Conference.

Your Excellency,

9. I am happy that our discussions this afternoon on the subjects of mutual interest have been most useful. I have no doubt that Your Excellency's visit will contribute to the strengthening of bilateral relations through greater mutual understanding and expanded cooperation. Lastly, I also hope that your stay in Malaysia will be memorable.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- May I invite you to join me in a toast to the good-health and well-being of His Excellency The President of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, U San Yu;  
- to the good health and well-being of His Excellency The Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, U Maung Maung Kha;  
- and to the lasting friendship between the peoples of Malaysia and Burma.

