

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

EVENT: THE DINNER HOSTED IN HONOUR OF HIS EXCELLENCY MR. PREMADASA,
THE PRIME MINISTER OF SRI LANKA

VENUE: SRI PERDANA, KUALA LUMPUR

DATE: 01 AUG 1988

TIME:

Your Excellency Mr. Premadasa,
Prime Minister of Sri Lanka;
Madame Premadasa;
Members of the Sri Lankan Delegation;
Honourable Ministers;
Excellencies;
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 Premadasa and the distinguished members of your delegation to Malaysia. Indeed your visit is to us evidence of your Government's desire to strengthen our bilateral relations and expand the dimensions of cooperation between our two countries.

2. I recall with fond memories my first meeting with Your Excellency when you made your first official visit to Malaysia in 1981. I was privileged to play host to Your Excellency and had the opportunity to have some very useful discussions on matters of importance to both our countries. I also recall the warmth and hospitality that the Government of Sri Lanka had extended to me and members of my delegation when I visited your country in 1983.

Your Excellency,

3. Malaysia and Sri Lanka have many things in common. Both were colonised in succession by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British. As Your Excellency well know, many Malay soldiers were recruited by the British to form the Ceylon Malay Rifle Regiment. From Sri Lanka, many Ceylonese Tamils and Sinhalese were recruited to serve in the civil service in Malaya. Many of these pioneers had opted to stay back in the land of their new homes. Today we have about 50,000 Malaysians of Sri Lankan origin who have greatly contributed to our national development. I understand that in Sri Lanka, there are now some 10,000 Sri Lankans of Malay origin who are descendents of the original pioneers of the Malay Rifle Regiment.

4. After independence, both our countries have pursued the democratic system of government best fit to fulfill our national aspirations and a free enterprise economy that would ensure the attainment of our social and economic development. Given the geographical proximity and the historical ties, the bonds of mutual friendship between our two countries have strengthened and expanded over the years, particularly since Your Excellency's first visit to Malaysia in 1981.

5. Malaysia and Sri Lanka have since entered into close cooperation in the cultural field, air and sea transportation, and the volume of trade have also vastly expanded. This is only the beginning. Malaysia stands ready and welcome further expansion in exchanges and cooperation with Sri Lanka. We in Malaysia cherish these bonds of friendship with the people of Sri Lanka, and are always prepared to render any assistance and cooperation we can towards your development efforts.

Your Excellency,

6. Both our countries share identical views on a number of international and regional issues. We are very satisfied on the efforts at coordinating our positions on such issues at the various fora including the Non-aligned Movement, the Commonwealth Conference, the South Commission and, of course, the United Nations. We are both staunch supporters of the concept of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality. We both agree that the peaceful resolution of the Afghanistan and the Kampuchean problems are vital steps towards the early realisation of the Zone of Peace in the Indian Ocean and South East Asia.

7. Malaysia and Sri Lanka also shares identical views on drug abuse. We firmly believe that it will take the concerted effort of the international community to fight the menace of drug abuse. It is towards this end that Malaysia had played a modest role in the convening of the International Conference Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Vienna in 1987. We hope that the guidelines adopted at the Conference will contribute positively in the eradication of drug abuse.

8. On the international economic scene, though the adverse conditions have somewhat ameliorated, the developing countries efforts, however, continued to be hamstrung by the 'rich-mans' club of the developed countries. The developing countries seek more trade and not aid; yet the walls of protectionism are constantly being erected against our exports. Such an instance is the insidious and underhand campaign being launched against Malaysia's palm oil and other tropical vegetable oils. In our quest for economic development, the developed countries should not attempt to obstruct us by constantly erecting protectionist walls under various guises. The principles of fair trade initially

enunciated by these developed countries should be upheld and not merely paid lip service to. The beggar thy neighbour policy of some developed countries does not serve the interests of the international economic system. Instability in the system is bound to have serious effects detrimental to the well-being of the community of nations. Developed countries must appreciate that the prosperity of the developing countries must have beneficial effects on their exports and sales of their manufactured products.

Your Excellency,

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

10. I would like once again to express our pleasure in welcoming you and Madame Premadasa to Malaysia and I hope that your stay here will be both enjoyable and memorable.

11. May I now invite Your Excellency, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen to rise and join me in a toast to the good health and happiness of His Excellency J.R. Jayawardene, the President of Sri Lanka and to the continued progress and prosperity and friendship of the peoples of Sri Lanka and Malaysia.