

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

EVENT: THE OFFICIAL DINNER IN HONOUR OF HIS EXCELLENCY RATU SIR KAMISESE MARA,
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

VENUE: SRI PERDANA, KUALA LUMPUR (K.L)

DATE: 26 NOV 1990

TIME:

Your Excellency Ratu Sir Kamiseke Mara;
Adi Lady Lala Mara;
Excellencies;
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with deep pleasure that my wife and I welcome you Mr Prime Minister and Adi Lala and members of your delegation to Malaysia. Your visit is a demonstration of the warm and friendly relations existing between our two countries -- a relationship that is built upon a tradition of mutual trust and assistance. Malaysians recall with appreciation the courage and valour of Fijian soldiers fighting alongside our own in the Malayan jungles in the defense of freedom and democracy. Stemming from this involvement there exists deep affection and goodwill among Malaysians for Fijians. My wife and I also recall with pleasure the warmth and kindness with which you and the people of Fiji received us when we visited Fiji in 1982.

2. Your visit provides an opportunity for us to discuss substantive elements of our relationship. This morning we had a useful and productive exchange of views. I am confident that the new thoughts and ideas that we explored together could help to provide additional dimension to our bilateral relations. On my part, I shall do my utmost to forge more substantive and fruitful links between Malaysia and Fiji.

3. We have at present three Malaysian companies operating in Fiji. With the new opportunities which your Government are offering, I hope many more of our businessmen would venture into Fiji. Although the trade volume between our two countries is small, it is increasing. This positive trend needs to be nurtured and encouraged. While urging Malaysian businesses to venture into Fiji, I also welcome Fijian businessmen to explore opportunities available in Malaysia.

Your Excellency,

4. The world today is undergoing changes of major proportions. New patterns of regional and international cooperation are emerging. Nevertheless there are still serious areas of discord which need to be tended to. Inequities persist in the international economic system and in trade. Numerous other issues have been introduced that make the resolution of such inequities more difficult. Given these

circumstances I believe there is a compelling need for closer cooperation amongst developing countries when facing our common challenges. Coordinated and concerted efforts too have to be made to expand economic relations among the developing countries. There is much we can learn and benefit from each other.

5. Malaysia is deeply committed to the concept of economic and technical cooperation among developing countries. Our hosting the first Summit of the Group of 15 in Kuala Lumpur and our continued involvement in the Group's activities testify to this commitment. Another is Malaysia's Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP). Within our modest resources, we would like to share the experience and expertise in development acquired over the years which may benefit other developing countries. I am happy to note that the training programmes offered within this framework have been widely utilised by the Government of Fiji. I hope such training could be usefully adapted to the needs of Fiji. If the training we are providing to the Fijians is found to be useful, it might be possible to expand the programme to include other areas not presently covered.

6. While bilateral cooperation is decidedly important, regional cooperation should not be neglected. The various questions raised by the dramatic changes in the economic and political scene world wide could best be responded to in a collective manner. We welcome initiatives and efforts in establishing dialogue and cooperation between ASEAN and the South Pacific Forum countries. We are neighbours, a fact which many of us intellectually accept but very few are serious enough to take advantage of. At the moment, despite our proximity, there is a lack of substance in the relations between the two regional groupings. In initiating and promoting this interlocking network of cooperation between ASEAN and the FORUM countries, it would be more prudent to limit ourselves to the more practical projects that will contribute to peace and prosperity in our area.

7. I note that Fiji has made impressive strides both economically and politically. The economic gains that accrue from the Interim Government's pragmatic policies have restored stability to Fiji. Much of the progress I believe is due to Your Excellency's leadership and wise counsel. And in much the same fashion, the new Constitution which was promulgated recently will provide the foundation that the nation needs to progress further.

Your Excellency,

8. You and I well know that in managing a multi racial nation, a continuous balance has to be made in meeting the opposing demands of our different communities. Despite the seemingly intractable problems that confront us, very unique opportunities are given to us to build a united nation whose people are proud to be its citizens. I believe the Fijians will rise to the challenges ahead. I wish Your Excellency and all Fijians of whatever racial antecedents well.

9. Once again, allow me to reiterate how happy we are to have you and Adi Lala as our guests. I am confident that your visit will contribute to closer relations between our two countries. I hope you and Adi Lala will have a most pleasant stay in Malaysia.

Distinguished guests,

10. May I now invite you to join me in a toast to the President, the Government and the people of the Republic of Fiji and to the continued friendship of our two countries and peoples.

Thank you.