

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

EVENT: THE DINNER HOSTED BY BARISAN NASIONAL IN HONOUR
OF DR. NELSON MANDELA DEP. PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL
CONGRESS

VENUE: PUTRA WORLD TRADE CENTRE (PWTC), KUALA LUMPUR (K.L)

DATE: 03 DEC 1990

TIME:

The Honourable Dr. Nelson Mandela,
Deputy President of the African National Congress;
Members of the ANC;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

We are deeply honoured to welcome in our midst this evening a truly great son of Africa, Dr. Nelson Mandela, the Deputy President of the African National Congress. On behalf of the Government and people of Malaysia, may I extend to you, Dr. Mandela, and members of your delegation, our very warm welcome. You will always find in the people of Malaysia the warmth and spirit of brotherhood and the strong support for your struggle.

2. This evening is indeed an historic occasion for Malaysia - historic because we are able to meet in person a giant of a man whose very name MANDELA has come to symbolise the struggle by the people of South Africa for freedom, for democracy and for basic human rights. For many of us you have come to epitomise fortitude and perseverance. We can see for ourselves that your long years of imprisonment have only served to strengthen your spirit, your determination and your commitment to the cause of dismantling apartheid and bringing democracy and justice to the peoples of South Africa.

3. Malaysia has been a staunch supporter of the anti-apartheid cause. We have followed with concern the struggle of the people of South Africa for freedom and for democracy. We have shared in spirit the pain and the sufferings which you and your colleagues have gone through in your years of imprisonment in the bid to pursue your cause. Like you, we

have never lost faith that the day will come when democracy will be upheld in South Africa.

4. We are therefore most encouraged by developments in South Africa over the past year since President De Klerk came into power; events which indicate that things may be moving closer to the dismantling of apartheid in the country. Beginning with President De Klerk's inaugural pledge to achieve a new South Africa free from white domination and oppression, the world has witnessed developments taking place in South Africa which could not have been envisaged two years ago. The world has lauded your release from prison; the release of other political prisoners; the unbanning of the African National Congress and other anti-apartheid groups; the lifting of the state of emergency in the various provinces of South Africa including that of Natal recently; and other pledges by President De Klerk to dismantle the pillars of apartheid. The decision of the African National Congress to suspend armed struggle has also contributed positively to creating a climate conducive for negotiations.

5. These developments have made it possible for you, Dr. Mandela, to be with us this evening, thousands of miles away from the prison cell which has for more than twenty-seven years kept you captive in person but not in spirit. These developments have been brought about partly by the continuous pressure which the international community has been putting on the Pretoria regime over many decades to dismantle the abominable system of institutionalised discrimination and oppression called apartheid - a system which segregates man from man according to the colour of his skin; a system which is totally unacceptable in this day and age.

6. Encouraged though we are by the developments in South Africa of late, apartheid is still in place. We share your concern, Dr. Mandela, that the international community cannot at this stage release the pressure on Pretoria. It may take many months yet for the dialogue which Pretoria has initiated with the ANC to show evidence that recent progress towards dismantling apartheid is irreversible and that the system itself will be dismantled. Until then, Malaysia will continue to maintain the pressure on the South African government through economic and other sanctions. We would like to urge other nations to do the same. We do not share the assessment of some Western nations that President De Klerk

has to be rewarded at this stage for the reforms he has initiated.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. I believe it is important that we maintain the momentum of developments in South Africa. All parties concerned should exert every effort to ensure a successful outcome to the ongoing negotiations between the ANC and the South African government. As a member of the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa (CFMSA), Malaysia has been monitoring closely the developments in South Africa and has participated with other members of the Committee in a continuous review of the situation there and of the international community's response to these developments. The Committee has had the benefit of your presence and your assessment of the situation when the Committee met in Abuja, Nigeria, in mid-May this year. We will continue to be guided by your perception.

8. Events since then have caused some concern to Malaysia. I refer to the armed clashes between various anti-apartheid groups in South Africa which have resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives over the past few months. I fear that this inter-factional violence, if allowed to continue, can undermine the progress made thus far towards dismantling apartheid. But I am sure that this problem is uppermost in your mind and that you will exert every effort and influence to contain it.

9. Your personal presence here in Malaysia, Dr. Mandela, brings home the realisation to many of us that democracy is not to be taken for granted by countries which have already obtained independence. It is a precious right which is to be protected and nurtured. It is a precious right which those of us in the Commonwealth are trying to strengthen.

10. Here in Malaysia, we have just completed our general election, and the results have demonstrated once again a victory for the people and democracy. It has been a keenly-contested election, but the people have made their choice clearly and unequivocally. The people of Malaysia are grateful that inspite of the various racial, ethnic and religious differences which are inherent in the social fabric of the Malaysian society, we have been able to exercise political freedom, unhampered, for the last 33 years. The leaders of Barisan Nasional, the ruling coalition, who are

your hosts tonight, offer you our prayers that the people of South Africa will also be able to enjoy this right free from violence in the near future and in the years to come. Malaysians will be among the first to rejoice on the day when you and each and every South African, irrespective of the colour of his skin, are able to determine South Africa's future through the ballot box.

11. Dr. Mandela, as I have said earlier in my speech, you have come to epitomise for many of us fortitude and perseverance. You have demonstrated strength and patience in your struggle against apartheid. You have sacrificed a lifetime to bring justice and democracy to your people. Your efforts will not be in vain. The international community will ensure that your objectives will be achieved.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. I would like to invite distinguished guests present tonight to rise and to drink to the good health of Dr. Nelson Mandela and to the success of his people's struggle against apartheid.

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