

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

EVENT: THE OFFICIAL DINNER HOSTED IN HONOUR OF HIS
EXCELLENCY MR. V.P. SINGH, PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

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

DATE: 04 JUN 1990

TIME:

Your Excellency Mr. V.P. Singh,
Prime Minister of India;
Mrs. Singh;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am indeed happy to be able to welcome you and Mrs. Singh to Kuala Lumpur. We feel particularly privileged because, I am told, this is Your Excellency's first official visit abroad since assuming office as Prime Minister.

2. Malaysia and India have a long tradition of friendship dating back much before the colonial era. India's struggle for independence was an inspiration to us all. As the beneficiaries of a common colonial heritage we share a number of institutions - such as the civil service and Parliamentary democracy - that provide a strong foundation for an enduring relationship between our two countries. Our peoples have always interacted freely. Many Malaysians attend tertiary institutions in India, and, India remains an important and popular destination for Malaysians who aspire to be doctors. Now, as members of the Commonwealth we continue to share many common aspirations.

3. Over the years our relations have expanded as manifested in the increasing trade and intensifying economic interaction between our two countries. Indian investments have played a significant role in the growth of the manufacturing sector in Malaysia since the 1970s. Indian contractors are also involved in construction in Malaysia. There exists considerable scope to further enhance our bilateral relations by encouraging investments, trade, tourism and cultural exchanges between our two countries. Such exchanges would help promote understanding between our two peoples and further consolidate the existing close relationship between us. We must together explore these opportunities for our mutual benefit.

Your Excellency,

4. While our bilateral relations have always been characterised by understanding and warmth, there has also been frequent consultations and close cooperation on a number of issues in the international arena. It is perhaps na-

tural that we have an identity of perceptions on a broad range of subjects of international and economic significance as we share membership in many international bodies. We have always stood up against injustices in South Africa, Palestine and elsewhere. We are both committed towards the objective of constructive South-South Cooperation. Indeed, we share the conviction that this world must be made a better place for all.

5. We are meeting, Mr. Prime Minister, at a time when events are unfolding in such a dramatic fashion. Who could not have foreseen the developments in Eastern Europe. But while we welcome change, it is essential that we have a proper appreciation of where the momentum of events will lead us to. We do not want to be swept willy-nilly by the euphoria over the changes. Our hope is that when the dust finally settles we would see a truly better world where everyone including us in the South would benefit as well.

6. Indeed, if there is to be a better tomorrow, I venture to suggest that there has never been a more urgent moment than the present for us to face-up to the challenges that confront us. While the world may seem a little safer now, we must not be lulled into believing that all is well. Tyranny and injustice still exist in South Africa, Palestine, and elsewhere, poverty and disease still remain as endemic as ever for most of the world; and, developing countries are still unable to free themselves from the web of indebtedness.

Your Excellency,

7. Touching on an issue nearer home, we are encouraged by efforts to end the conflict in Cambodia. Although peace still proves elusive, the prospect for a settlement looks bright. We in ASEAN have always had faith in the value of constructive cooperation in the promotion of regional stability and progress. We are therefore supportive of the efforts of the South Asian countries to generate regional cooperation and peace through SAARC. Functional and practical cooperation as well as regular consultations between neighbours, we in ASEAN have learnt, can prove invaluable in creating the right environment conducive to regional peace and stability. Malaysia still has intractable problems with neighbours but we do not allow these to stand in the path of our cooperation in other fields which can bring mutual benefit.

8. Malaysia stands ready to work in concert with India in the search for solutions for the many problems that continue to plague the world. I note with much satisfaction that India has a tradition of producing great statesmen who have been at the fore-front of many initiatives to ease global tensions and to build a more equitable economic order. India has always worked for a stable international environment and India's contributions to the developing world is a matter of record. I feel confident, Mr. Prime Minister,

that under your leadership India will continue in these endeavours which have become a hall-mark of Indian statesmanship.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

9. May I invite you to join me in a toast to the good health of His Excellency Prime Minister Mr. V.P. Singh and Mrs. Singh, the Government and the people of India, and to Malaysia-India relations.

Thank you.