

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

EVENT: THE OFFICIAL DINNER IN HONOUR OF HIS EXCELLENCY  
PATRICIO AYLWIN PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHILE

VENUE: SANTIAGO

DATE: 20 JUN 1991

TIME:

Your Excellency President Patricio Aylwin,  
Madame Aylwin,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

May I first of all thank you Mr. President for the very warm welcome that has been extended to my wife and I and to members of my delegation. Chile used to be very remote for us but of late we have been hearing much more about your great country and we are delighted to be here today, after what must be the first direct flight from Kuala Lumpur across the South Pacific to Santiago.

2. As I journeyed across the Pacific to come to Chile, I felt a sense of wonder at the vast geographical distance that separate our two countries. To this must be added cultural and linguistic differences as well. It is not surprising therefore that our relations though friendly and cordial, have not been quite so active until very recently.

3. And yet, Mr. President, our world is becoming more and more interdependent. The system of global trade and commerce in particular cannot but link our destinies for better or for worse. If we are to progress and prosper we must overcome the barriers that separate us and join hands both in constructing a fair and equitable international trading system and in enhancing bilateral economic and technical cooperation.

4. Chile and Malaysia are both Pacific nations. The Pacific has already become the world's most dynamic growth centre and is set to play a leading role in global politics and economics. If the Pacific is to continue to surge ahead economically, a free and open trading system is a fundamental necessity. The Pacific must evolve more fully into a basin of cooperation. It must not be allowed to become a cauldron of rivalry and unhealthy competition, whether economic or political. Neither must it be made secondary to the interests of any particular nation.

5. The vast Pacific Ocean has separated nations and peoples more completely than any other body of water. But today the wonders of modern technology has caused the Pacific to shrink. We can speak with each other as if we are only a

street away and in the time it takes to drive from Kuala Lumpur to Bangkok in neighbouring Thailand, we can actually fly into each other's capital. The Pacific Ocean should no longer be the barrier it was and Chile and Malaysia must pioneer new partnerships between the countries of the Pacific to take advantage of the shrunken ocean.

6. It is in full awareness of this that I come to Chile with the earnest hope that we would be able to put in place a new bilateral framework for sustained cooperation between our two countries. On the basis of our discussions today, and given your own very strong commitment to this cause, I feel confident that this can be achieved. Certainly the agreements on Trade and Economic and Technical Cooperation, and the Bilateral Payments Agreement that we will sign are steps towards realising this commitment. We must now take steps to realise the contents of these agreements so that there would be tangible improvements in trade, investment and technical exchanges.

7. Malaysia and several other East Asian countries are presently registering high rates of growth ranging from between 7 to 10 per cent. This in turn has generated an enormous demand for goods and services. There is no reason why Chile cannot supply some of these goods and services and thus participate in East Asia's dynamic growth. I have brought with me more than 60 businessmen who are keenly interested in developing business ties with Chile and I am hopeful that the contacts they will establish here in Chile will help accelerate the pace of cooperation not only between Malaysia and Chile but between Chile and East Asia as well.

Excellency,

8. May I once again thank you for receiving me and my delegation with such warmth and hospitality. May I now propose a toast to Your Excellency's good health and to the friendship and cooperation between our two countries.