

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

EVENT: DINNER HOSTED BY H.E. MR CHUAN LEEKPAI, P.M. OF THAILAND

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DATE: 19 AUG 1993

TIME:

Your Excellency Mr Chuan Leekpai,
Prime Minister of Thailand;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

May I express my sincere appreciation to Your Excellency and to the Government of Thailand for the warm welcome and generous hospitality accorded to me and my delegation. It is a great pleasure for me to be in Bangkok, a city which remains always vibrant and enchanting. The continuously changing Bangkok skyline is a reflection of the remarkable economic progress that Thailand has been achieving.

2. I certainly welcome this opportunity to visit Thailand and meet your Excellency again, having had the privilege of playing host to you and members of your delegation in Kuala Lumpur last January. This visit will provide me with the opportunity to exchange views with you on important subjects of mutual interest to both our countries. We had very good discussions in Kuala Lumpur. We have again had very fruitful consultations and exchange of views earlier today. I look forward to more consultations between the two sides during the course of this visit in the common effort to expand relations between our two neighbourly countries.

Your Excellency,

3. When we met some seven months ago, you and I noted with profound satisfaction the excellent cooperation between Malaysia and Thailand in a wide range of fields. But we also agreed that more could be done to enhance our bilateral cooperation. The broad areas of cooperation under the purview of the Joint Commission and the General Border Committee are generally going on very well. In many instances they manifest the trust and confidence Malaysia and Thailand place in each other. They are a product of long-standing friendship, built upon the deep-rooted spirit of good neighbourliness. We do, however, encounter problems in our relations off and on. But I am confident that we can overcome those problems, relying upon the same spirit of friendship and good neighbourliness that has guided us in our relations in the past.

Your Excellency,

4. During our discussions last January, we agreed that more efforts should be undertaken on both sides to tap the full potential of trade and other economic opportunities between our two countries and between us and other countries. For this purpose, I have invited some prominent Malaysian entrepreneurs and businessmen to join me on this visit. Their presence in my delegation is symbolic of the important role the private sector can play in complementing the efforts of the two Governments to enhance bilateral economic cooperation between our two countries. I am confident that we can achieve a more constructive and mutually rewarding cooperation if the Malaysian and Thai private sectors were to focus on the numerous opportunities for trade, investment and tourism that exist in and between our countries, as well as in exploring joint ventures in other parts of the world.

5. It is certainly my hope that private sector cooperation would develop fully into an ASEAN-wide phenomenon so as to enhance intra-ASEAN Trade and help expedite the realisation of Asean Free Trade Area (AFTA). In this regard, both the Governments and private sectors have to play equally important roles in developing a strong sense of regional purpose so that AFTA could be sooner realised. Intra-ASEAN trade is expanding. AFTA could certainly help accelerate this trend. Malaysian and Thai entrepreneurs and businessmen could contribute immensely to this process.

6. I am happy that Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand have agreed to cooperate in developing a sub-regional growth area involving parts of the three countries. A Tripartite Ministerial Meeting held in Langkawi last month is a clear manifestation of our common desire to translate quickly the idea into practical reality. I am confident that the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMTGT) would bring about tremendous benefits to all the three countries. But it is crucial that besides the commitment of the three governments, there should also be the active participation and involvement of the private sectors of the three countries in order that this triangular partnership will work well and succeed.

7. I also wish to express my thanks to Thailand for the support given to the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC). It is indeed gratifying that ASEAN has now achieved consensus on the EAEC. ASEAN has once again demonstrated its ability to address an important issue in a pragmatic manner. Others had expected ASEAN to come up with the practical solutions and ASEAN has done so. It is now up to the East Asian countries to come to agreement on how EAEC should progress. We should now be able to look forward to the convening of the inaugural meeting of EAEC in the very near future.

Your Excellency,

8. Malaysia has always believed that a stable and prosperous region would be crucial to its own stability and

prosperity. Therefore, we welcome the positive developments in Indochina. Malaysia, like Thailand, sees the need to cooperate with our neighbours in Indochina so as to enable them to achieve a higher level of economic development. We have therefore embarked on modest cooperation programmes for these countries. But our resources are quite limited. We may not be able to fulfill some of the needs of those countries. It would be worthwhile for Malaysia and Thailand to work together, possibly even in partnership with the other ASEAN countries, to coordinate our technical cooperation programmes vis-a-vis these three countries to ensure optimisation of resources and results.

9. General elections have been held successfully in Cambodia under the supervision of UNTAC. We should all be encouraged by the process of national reconciliation taking place under the leadership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk and wish him success in his efforts. However, I believe the Prince and his compatriots need the strong support of the international community in their effort to rebuild their country and revive the spirit and potential of the Cambodian people. The United Nations must continue to play a role in ensuring peace and stability as well as helping to accelerate economic reconstruction in Cambodia.

Your Excellency,

10. While the conflict in Cambodia has come to a positive settlement, other parts of the world continue to suffer the ravages of war and political turmoil. We cannot ignore the plight of the Bosnians. There remains little political commitment among those who are directly concerned to adopt concrete measures to halt the hostilities and ensure just and lasting peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Malaysia is working actively with other countries to help the Bosnians defend their lives, protect their rights and keep their homeland. We believe that more serious efforts have to be done to save Bosnia-Herzegovina and its people from disintegration and total destruction.

Your Excellency,

11. I view the tradition of regular exchanges of visits between the prime ministers, ministers, senior officials and members of the private sectors of Malaysia and Thailand as important for the promotion of bilateral relations and cooperation. Such exchanges provide us the opportunity to exchange views, explore fresh ideas and identify new areas of cooperation, not only in the bilateral context, but also in the regional and international contexts. They have proven to be successful in resolving issues and problems as well as in enhancing cooperation in many areas. I look forward to more of these exchanges with you.

