

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

EVENT: THE BANQUET HOSTED BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF BANGLADESH
BEGUM KHALEDA ZIA

VENUE: IN DHAKA, BANGLADESH

DATE: 13 FEB 1993

TIME:

Your Excellency Begum Khaleda Zia,
Prime Minister of Bangladesh;
Excellencies;

Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of my wife, members of my delegation and on my own behalf, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to you and the Government of Bangladesh for the warm welcome you have so kindly extended to us since our arrival in Dhaka.

2. I have had the pleasure of visiting your country sometime in 1983. Many important developments have taken place in Bangladesh since then. Of particular significance was the introduction of representative government under your premiership in 1991. I would like to congratulate you and your country for your strong commitment to democracy and the well-being of Bangladesh.

Madame Prime Minister,

3. I am pleased that relations between our two countries have developed positively. The recent convening of the Joint Commission, at Ministerial level, reflects the keen interest of our countries to expand relations in all fields. Steps are now being taken to strengthen the framework of cooperation and to ensure the early implementation of the various decisions that were agreed upon. Although our bilateral trade remains relatively small, its growth is encouraging. I am also pleased to note that bilateral activity between our countries is on the increase and there have been useful exchanges of visits. It is also noteworthy that, in the last two years, Bangladesh has become an important source of manpower in the expansion of Malaysia's industrial and plantation sectors.

4. In the promotion of private sector interaction between our two countries, our governments have the task of ensuring that there is a conducive climate to stimulate this critically important area in our relations. An encouraging development was the initiative of the private sector to establish a Malaysian Trade Centre in Dhaka as it will provide a focal point for business transactions between Bangladesh and Malaysia. I hope a similar centre will also

be established by your country in Kuala Lumpur.

5. Bangladesh's socio-economic programmes and privatisation policy also provide considerable opportunities for bilateral collaboration. The Malaysian Government will encourage the private sector to explore the potential in this area. Our government agencies will do their part to facilitate this process. We would also welcome exchanges of information in the privatisation processes and results.

Madame Prime Minister,

6. Under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme Malaysia has worked together with Bangladesh for mutual interest. A review of such cooperation, covering both short and long term programmes, as well as small scale projects, is now being made. Although we are a developing country, and our own means are necessarily limited, we firmly believe in South-South cooperation in technical assistance to take advantage of the available expertise in the developing world.

7. Malaysia is interested in cooperation with Bangladesh in the fields of agriculture, education, defence and religion as well as in strengthening our sporting, cultural and youth exchange programmes. Priority should be given to implementing proposals that would best serve human resource and socio-economic development. In this regard, Malaysia looks forward to its cooperation with Bangladesh in the proposed establishment of the Bangladesh Pilgrimage and Fund Board.

8. Inter-regional cooperation between SAARC* and ASEAN is an important framework for strengthening our ties with each other. I look forward to the stepping up of consultations between the two groupings to harmonise the goals of these organisations and to coordinate their responses to global development.

9. Developing countries today face tremendous challenges in bringing about a fair and just international order. The end of the Cold War and the demise of communism has brought forth new problems and challenges for the South. Unless we take a unified stand against attempts to impose on us increasing conditionalities on the issues of the environment, human rights and democracy, we will find ourselves increasingly marginalised. It is important therefore that we work closely in international fora such as the UN, the OIC, the Commonwealth and other international organisations.

10. Malaysia is deeply disturbed by the tragic developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The brutalities of the Serbs against the Bosnians are intolerable and we are frustrated by the inability of the global community to take the decisive action that is required to halt the horrors of "ethnic cleansing". Instead, we see double standards being applied in the action taken against Iraq which, unacceptably, went beyond the U.N. mandate, while the same powers appear un-

willing to address the situation in Bosnia, where the assault on human rights is more obvious and more blatant.

Madame Prime Minister,

11. My visit to Bangladesh reflects Malaysia's earnest desire to further strengthen the close ties that exist between our two countries. I look forward to our special relationship being further consolidated through the regular exchange of visits, the implementation of concrete action programmes and increased activity between the private sectors of Bangladesh and Malaysia in the years to come.