

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

EVENT: OFFICIAL LUNCHEON HOSTED BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL  
OF MINISTERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA, H.E. ALEKSANDER MEKSI

VENUE: TIRANA, ALBANIA

DATE: 12 JUL 1993

TIME:

H.E. Aleksander Meksi, The Prime Minister of Albania;  
Madam Durata Meksi;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Malaysia and Albania had established diplomatic relations twelve years ago. However, we knew very little of each other and had little to do with each other. More often than not, when Albania was mentioned, one of your most celebrated daughters and a Nobel Prize Winner, Mother Theresa came to mind. Nevertheless, for most Malaysians, Albania seems such a far and distant place.

2. That we are here together today represents a significant milestone in our relations, ushered in by the dramatic political and economic changes that have taken place in Albania very recently. My wife and I, and members of my delegation are therefore very delighted to be in this country, bringing with us the greetings of friendship of the government and people of Malaysia to the government and people of Albania.

3. At this juncture, I wish to express to you, Your Excellency, our deep appreciation for the warm welcome and kind hospitality that have been accorded to us since our arrival. The excellent arrangements you have made have given us the opportunity to appreciate the beauty of your country, to understand the policy changes that have been introduced under your government and to assess the possible areas of cooperation between our two countries.

Your Excellency,

4. This morning I have had very useful discussions with H.E. the President as well as with you and other members of the Council of Ministers. I am now better acquainted with your government's policies and programmes for Albania's economic development in order to bring progress and prosperity to the people in an atmosphere of freedom and democracy. It is indeed a daunting task to undertake -- a task that not only requires enormous capital and know-how

but also a new frame of mind and attitude. My own country, Malaysia, had gone through such an experience when, upon becoming independent in 1957, it had to undertake a series of development programmes to alleviate poverty and to transform the economy from mere dependence on the export of primary commodities to one that is diversified, with a strong emphasis on processing and manufacturing industries.

5. Our efforts succeeded due to a combination of several factors, among them are the right policies, hardwork and discipline, political stability and the ability of the different ethnic and religious groups that make up the Malaysian population to work together as a nation. Today the people of Malaysia are enjoying one of the highest standards of living among developing countries and we are confident of achieving our goal of becoming a developed country by the year 2020. We have accumulated considerable experience and expertise in different aspects of economic management and planning including the privatisation of government industries. Should you think that our experience will be of benefit to Albania, we are ready to share them with you and provide training to Albanians in specific areas where we have the expertise under our Technical Cooperation Programme.

6. As a country that has an open economy and practises the free enterprise system, Malaysia has a very active private sector that has made significant contribution to the country's economic development. Malaysian businessmen and entrepreneurs are encouraged to seek new markets and invest overseas in projects that could bring benefits to Malaysia and the countries concerned. We shall encourage our private sector to look at the various opportunities to participate in the economic development of Albania through investment and joint-ventures in areas that are now open to foreign participation.

Your Excellency,

7. The end of the Cold War had given rise to fresh hopes and expectations of global peace and stability and a new world order. Unfortunately such optimism proved to be premature. Several long-standing issues remain unresolved while new regional and sub-regional conflicts emerged in various parts of the world. The disintegration of the old world order had brought to surface previously suppressed ethnic nationalist sentiments, intolerance and rivalries. No where are such developments more pronounced than in Bosnia-Herzegovina where blatant aggression and the drive for ethnic supremacy by the Serbs is leading to the destruction and annihilation of an entire group of people and nation.

8. Albania's close proximity to this horrendous scene of genocide and ethnic cleansing understandably causes your country acute concern as it does to us in Malaysia. The unwillingness of the major powers to take resolute and

decisive action to put an end to this open aggression against the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the blatant abuse of human rights of the Bosnian people, is totally incomprehensible and unacceptable.

9. Malaysia also shares Albania's anxiety and concern over other developments in the former Yugoslavia, especially the situation in Kosovo where the population, mostly of Albanian descent, are under tremendous pressure by the Serbs. We agree that preventive action should be initiated for the peace and stability of the Balkans and the region.

Your Excellency,

10. In conclusion, I wish to once again thank you for the kind and gracious hospitality accorded to my wife and I, as well as to members of the Malaysian delegation. This has been a memorable 'getting-to-know-you' visit for all of us and I hope it will be the beginning of more contacts and exchanges between our two countries. I look forward to the pleasure of reciprocating your generous hospitality in Malaysia.