

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

EVENT: THE CIVIC RECEPTION HELD AT NORTH PLAZA, BANGLADESH JATIYO
SANGSHAD (PARLIAMENT)

VENUE: DHAKA, BANGLADESH

DATE: 13 FEB 1993

TIME:

Your Excellency Begum Khaleda Zia,
Prime Minister of Bangladesh;
Excellencies;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be in this historic city of Dhaka again. I wish to thank Mayor Mirza Abbas for hosting this grand civic reception and for his kind words. It is a great honour indeed for me to receive the key to Dhaka city as a symbol of the close and brotherly ties that exist between our two countries.

2. In standing before you here today, I am deeply conscious of the simple yet majestic Jatiyo Sangshad Building behind me. Our gathering in the shadow of your magnificent parliament is indeed significant in manifesting our respect for the 'house of the people' and commitment to the principles of democracy.

3. Our two countries have a common faith in democratic and representative government. We believe in elections and the rights and freedom of the common man to choose leaders and governments of his own. Through blood and tears, through pain and frustration and, frequently, through trial and error we have evolved our own democratic systems to meet the aspiration and the ideals of our societies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. The democratic system is, however, only a means to an end. The ultimate goal is social and political stability for the pursuit of economic development and well-being. Democracy cannot exist for the sake of democracy alone. Democracy is meaningless if it fails to enhance the well-being of the people and if turmoil and disorder becomes the way of life. Legitimacy in government attained through the democratic process should lead to the promotion rather than the regular disruption of legitimate social, political and economic activities. It is essential therefore that democracy and development in all fields go hand in hand without the former being a liability to the latter.

5. No developing country however, could be expected to practise the so-called 'perfect democracy', as is understood by the West. Indeed even for the West what is perfect today will be defective tomorrow. The basic priority should be the rapid economic development for the benefit of the people. Expecting developing countries to forego development in favour of an alien concept of a perfect democracy can lead to the actual demise of democracy itself. Exercising absolute democratic rights should not outweigh the need for stability and the general well-being of the people. In all things there must be moderation and accommodation.

6. The provisions of a democratic system are no guarantee for success. Each democratic nation therefore, big or small, developed or developing, has still to shape its own destiny and find its own place in the international community. It has to live with all the strength and resources that it has and the weaknesses that it inherits. It has to be guided by the wisdom and vision of its leaders, the administrative skills of its bureaucrats, the entrepreneurial dynamism of its private sector, the discipline of its students and workers, the loyalty of its armed forces, and most importantly perhaps, the support of its people. Hard work of course remains the key ingredient without which no policies, however sound, could be successfully implemented.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. In a world of inequitable distribution of wealth and opportunities it is only fair to see those who are better off giving to those in need. Many a time however, donors can be most patronising. Worse still, donors can sometimes be unnecessarily severe in their criticism of the policies and practises of the recipients. It is as if the ability to give is also a licence to preach and to arrogate to the donors the right to shower advice that are not solicited. Frustrations therefore arise on the part of the recipients when the sheer need for aid means having to accept conditionalities and priorities determined by the donors.

8. For this reason Malaysia has struggled hard to free itself of economic dependence in order to make political independence gained in 1957 meaningful. It has not been easy or completely successful, but then nothing that is worthwhile is easy to come by. We accept the need to exercise self-restrain and discipline in order to free ourselves from submission to the will of others. Independence has a price. Nothing in this world or the next is free.

9. Malaysia believes that its strength could only come from deep within itself including the radical mobilisation of whatever resources it has. It has to have a clear vision and be able to look to the future while drawing upon the lessons of the past. It has to devise its own formula for success bearing in mind its peculiar circumstances, historical experiences, socio-cultural condition and level of economic development. It believes that in the final analysis

each nation has to fend for itself and that respect from others could only be won if it can manage itself better than when it was governed by others.

10. I believe that Bangladesh too has the same aspiration. You now have the opportunity to strive for the good of your people. Their voices could now be heard loud and clear through the Jatiyo Sangshad. With the strong commitment of a fair government and the support of its industrious and peace-loving people, rapid development would certainly come about.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. Malaysia is a developing country like Bangladesh. We feel we have much to learn from each other's experience. We fully appreciate the many problems confronting the Bangladeshi Government as it tackles the various impediments including natural hazards and calamities in the process of creating a progressive nation. Since establishing diplomatic relations our two countries have developed a strong foundation for mutually beneficial collaboration in all fields. Malaysia would continue to play its part in consultation with the Bangladeshi side. I am confident that the brotherly relations between Malaysia and Bangladesh will go from strength to strength in the years to come.