

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

EVENT: THE OFFICIAL DINNER IN HONOUR OF THE RT. HON. JAMES BOLGER
PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

VENUE: SRI PERDANA, KUALA LUMPUR

DATE: 19 MAY1994

TIME:

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to welcome you and Mrs. Bolger and the other members of your delegation to Malaysia. We have met in Harare and in Tokyo. Your present visit provides us the opportunity to renew our friendship and to discuss important issues of mutual concern. I hope your brief stay here will be a fruitful and enjoyable one.

2. Malaysia and New Zealand have enjoyed excellent relations. We are separated by a vast expanse of ocean, yet we have traditionally had close relations. Strong historical, institutional and political links as well as good personal relationships between leaders and officials in both countries have done much to strengthen our ties. Our common membership of major regional and international organisations and shared perspectives on many issues of common concern have also helped cement further the relationship over the years. There is great potential for deepening and expanding our relations and cooperation. Your visit provides the opportunity for both countries to explore further areas of cooperation in various fields.

3. Our strong links can be traced back to the days before Malaysia achieved its independence. Malaysia remains fully appreciative of New Zealand's contributions towards safeguarding the security and integrity of this country against internal communist threat. The sacrifices made by the many young men from New Zealand in defence of democracy and freedom in Malaysia will remain forever etched in the collective memory of this nation.

4. The close relationship nurtured over the years has evolved and developed into a well established framework of cooperation between our two armed forces, bilaterally and in the context of the Five Power Defence Arrangements. Our armed forces personnel have been participating in various joint exercises. The regular exchange of visits at the level of ministers and senior officials of the defence establishment of both sides has helped to strengthen the cooperation. Malaysia has benefited from the Mutual Assistance Programme which has seen some 500 members of the Malaysian Armed Forces trained in New Zealand between 1979 and 1993. Similarly a number of New Zealand military personnel have been trained in Malaysia. I firmly believe

that the scope and level of this cooperation can be further enhanced in the future.

5. Malaysia and New Zealand have also enjoyed close cooperation in the field of education. Over the years, thousands of Malaysian students have benefited from their studies at institutions of higher learning in New Zealand. At present, there are many Malaysian students studying at various polytechnics and universities in New Zealand. Important cooperative ventures between universities and institutions in both countries have developed such as between the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and the University of Otago. Efforts to widen twinning arrangements between institutions of higher learning in both countries are a step in the right direction and should be further encouraged. Malaysia welcomes New Zealand's continued cooperation in this sector.

6. Most Malaysians are familiar with products of New Zealand, especially the excellent dairy and meat products. By now, New Zealanders also should have become quite familiar with Malaysian products, including our Proton cars which have been exported to your country over the last few years. Our annual two-way trade is currently valued at RM1,139 million. Both sides should endeavour to increase the volume of trade.

7. There exist tremendous scope and opportunities for businessmen from New Zealand to collaborate with their Malaysian counterparts to promote trade and investment between the two countries. Malaysia continues to welcome New Zealand participation in Malaysia's economic development programmes. We are also interested in finding economic opportunities in your country. I am happy to note that the business councils established in both countries are in the forefront in promoting the objective of encouraging greater economic interaction between the two countries.

8. Malaysia and New Zealand are equally committed to the principle of free trade among nations. Free trade in fact forms the fundamental prerequisite for the successful realisation of Malaysia's Vision 2020. I am quite sure that New Zealand has similar aspirations. As trading nations we have worked closely together towards ensuring the speedy conclusion of the Uruguay Round. We should work together to preserve our gains. It is vital that after Marakkesh, no new conditionalities and restrictions are introduced that would not only scuttle the hard won achievements of the GATT negotiations but also stymie the socio-economic development of the developing countries.

9. I am glad that your Government is taking serious efforts at promoting relations with your immediate neighbours in the East Asian region. The policy of Asia 2000 actively pursued by you is a constructive move that will no doubt bring benefit to New Zealand in the long term. Your long-standing relationships with countries in the region, including Malaysia, will prove

to be a valuable asset. So would your recent economic achievements. New Zealand is one of ASEAN's first dialogue partners. You have made very important contributions to the socio-economic development of the ASEAN countries as well as to the achievement of peace and stability in this region.

10. Malaysia recognises that New Zealand holds an important position in the international arena currently as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Membership in the Council bears with it a grave responsibility. Members of the Council must face up to the challenges arising from the numerous tragic conflicts currently raging around the world. We see among others, endless carnage in Afghanistan, brutal and senseless massacre in Rwanda and savage aggression perpetrated by the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. All these situations call for decisive action by the Security Council. New Zealand's decision to provide more troops for peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina is most welcomed. Malaysia is also doing her part within her means. We will continue to uphold the principles of justice and fairplay. The blatant Serb aggression must not be allowed to continue in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Security Council should take steps to lift sanctions so as to allow the Bosnians to defend themselves against Serb aggression. Peace keepers are useless if they retreat when faced with defiance. If they are not prepared to take risks they should allow their wards to defend themselves. Under no circumstance is it justified for them to sacrifice those they are supposed to protect in order to save their own skin.

11. The United Nations will soon celebrate its 60th anniversary in 1995. For the UN to remain effective and dynamic, its strengths and weaknesses would have to be reviewed. Where necessary, organisational changes should be made to benefit all members and the world in general. The veto power accorded to the permanent members of the Security Council should be re-examined and the Security Council membership should also be expanded to take into account present realities. The credibility of the United Nations is at its lowest ebb. Unless it is more resolute it will turn into a welfare body distributing aid after the event.

12. While death, destruction and suffering continue to plague people in many parts of the world, others have had the occasion to rejoice and celebrate. There have been positive developments for the Palestinians. We all wish them further success in their continued struggle to achieve their dream of a homeland. We have also just witnessed the greatest event in the modern history: the final burial of apartheid and the birth of a democratic and multi-racial South Africa. Malaysia joins New Zealand in welcoming South Africa back into the fold of the Commonwealth. It is most fitting that South Africa should formally rejoin the Commonwealth at the next CHOGM which will be hosted by New Zealand. I look forward to being there.

13. Your visit marks an important milestone in the strengthening of the close and cordial relations between Malaysia and New Zealand. I hope that, despite its brevity, your visit would be an enjoyable experience for you and members of your delegation.