

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

EVENT: THE STATE BANQUET HOSTED BY HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT
SAPARMURAD NIYAZOV

VENUE: THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL VISIT TO TURKMENISTAN

DATE: 04 OCT 1994

TIME:

My wife and I are greatly honoured by your kind invitation to visit Turkmenistan. We are indeed delighted to be here. The friendliness and cordiality that we have witnessed convince us that our visit to your country will be memorable and fruitful. We look forward to seeing and learning more of your beautiful country in the next few days.

2. A few months ago in June, we had the privilege and honour of receiving you in Malaysia. You will recall that we had fruitful discussions and the opportunity to exchange views on wide-ranging issues of common interest, in particular on ways and means of bringing our two countries closer. Generally we were in agreement that there is a great potential to expand the scope and depth of our relations.

3. My visit to your country provides me with the opportunity to reaffirm Malaysia's commitment to cooperate with Turkmenistan and to strengthen our bilateral relations. I am confident that over the next few days, we shall together be able to identify more clearly the many opportunities for trade and investment between our two countries.

4. I have brought along with me a number of prominent Malaysian businessmen and investors who will have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with local conditions as well as meet and discuss with their Turkmen colleagues on possible areas of cooperation and common endeavour for mutual benefit. I believe significant opportunities exist for such cooperation in the petrochemical industry, infrastructure development and tourism. As a substantial trading nation, Malaysia will also do what we can to facilitate trade and to ensure business cooperation with Turkmenistan.

5. Recently in August, a team of Malaysian officials visited Ashgabat and met with your officials to identify aspects of economic planning and development, where Malaysia's experience might be of interest and relevance to Turkmenistan. We are indeed happy to be able to share our experience with you and we look forward to continued

interaction, in particular, under Malaysia's Technical Cooperation Programme.

6. I note with interest that many countries in this region are undergoing positive economic transformation. This is encouraging, particularly in this present era when economic capacity, to a great extent, influences the general conduct of international relations. Developing countries should cooperate and strengthen ties with one another to develop their respective economic capacities. Sustained economic prosperity will enable us to become respected members of the international community.

7. The key to prosperity for all nations lies in their capacity to cope with global integration. The challenge to the world as a whole in this age, is to prove ourselves capable of integrating all countries, big and small, fully into global economic processes. Today, there is rapid integration of the global economy through overlapping regionalisation processes. The Asia- Pacific region, to which Malaysia and the nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) belong, is in the fore-front of this inexorable process. We look forward to our region interacting steadily with the region of Central Asia, as indeed with all the regions of the world. Bilateral relations between Malaysia and Turkmenistan will, in this regard, pave the way for greater cooperation between our respective regions.

8. May I once again on behalf of my wife and members of the Malaysian delegation, as well as myself, express our sincere appreciation and gratitude for your generous hospitality and for receiving us with such warmth and friendship. The ties that we are forging through your recent visit to Malaysia and through my visit to Turkmenistan on this occasion, will constitute the firm foundation for what I believe will be substantial relations and cooperation between our two countries and peoples.