

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

EVENT: DINNER IN HONOUR OF HIS EXCELLENCY P.V. NARASIMHA RAO,
PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

VENUE: SRI PERDANA, KUALA LUMPUR

DATE: 03 AUG 1995

TIME:

It is indeed a privilege and an honour for me to play host to the leader of a great Asian nation with which Malaysia has close and cordial relations dating back for centuries. In welcoming Your Excellency and members of Your Excellency's distinguished delegation to Malaysia, I am reminded of the immense contribution India has made to the rich cultural and religious diversity of this country. It is a contribution that has laid a strong foundation for the friendship and cooperation that happily exist between our two countries. Your visit will no doubt further strengthen this relationship.

2. It is no coincidence that Malaysia and India share many common views and perceptions on regional and international issues, especially those concerning the rights of developing countries to development and the promotion of international peace and stability. It is a commonality borne out of our shared historical experience and of our common aspiration for a better world for mankind—a world governed by a sense of fair play, justice and respect for international law and norms of behaviour. This has made it possible for both our countries to cooperate and work closely together at the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the Non-Aligned Movement, the G-15 as well as other international fora.

3. Close as our cooperation has been on regional and international issues, a major test of our close relations must be the level of bilateral economic cooperation between the two countries. Although the value of total trade between Malaysia and India in 1994 had shown an encouraging increase over that in 1993, and several Malaysian and Indian companies are operating in each others' country under joint-venture arrangements, the level of economic interaction and cooperation is still low compared to the potential available. There is therefore a lot more that Malaysia and India could do together to realise the full potential of economic opportunities offered by both countries. This is an issue that we had deliberated upon this morning and on which several understandings have been reached.

4. It is the intention of the Government of Malaysia to see that the understandings we have reached are carried out for the mutual benefit of our two countries. Malaysia is committed to working and cooperating closely with India not only in the spirit of South-South cooperation but also because of the importance that we attach to India as an economic and political force. We see in a prosperous India an important economic partner, a market, as well as a source of stability in the South Asian region.

5. As governments liberalise their economies, the role of the private sector becomes more crucial in a country's development process. The agreements and understandings we have reached on economic cooperation could only be realised with the participation of the private sector. I am therefore very happy, Your Excellency, that you have brought with you a number of prominent Indian businessmen and entrepreneurs who are keen to develop business relations with their Malaysian counterparts.

6. I have reason to be optimistic that their visit and their discussions with their Malaysian counterparts will result in concrete projects both in Malaysia and India. My optimism is in fact inspired very much by the brave economic policies and reforms that Your Excellency had initiated. The encouraging growth that India had experienced and the dramatic increase in foreign investment in your country speaks well of the policies that you have introduced. In opening the country to foreign investment, Your Excellency has created opportunities for Malaysian companies to participate in India's development.

7. As we rejoice over the economic progress that our two countries have made and the peace and security under which our people live, others in other parts of the world are not so fortunate. The peoples of Somalia, Rwanda, Chechnya; and in particular Bosnia-Herzegovina are being killed, raped, plundered and driven out of their countries. It is ironic that in this day and age, on the eve of the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations, the powerful and self-proclaimed defenders of justice, human rights and peace seem paralysed when faced with genocide perpetrated right in front of them. In Bosnia-Herzegovina resolution after resolution had been passed calling for strong action to protect the innocent Bosnians. Yet nothing has been done by those in a position to do so that would effectively put an end to Serbian aggression and brutalities against the Bosnian Muslims. Rather than celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations, it is perhaps more fitting to declare the anniversary as a day of mourning for the failure of the United Nations to live up to its expectation as the guardian

of peace and protector of the weak and the helpless.

8. Your visit is indeed a brief one but it marks another milestone in the relations between our two countries. In the next few months there will be many opportunities for us to meet and continue the ongoing process of consultations with one another over issues of mutual concern. I look forward to meeting with Your Excellency again soon.