

SPEECH BY: Dato Seri Dr **Mahathir** Bin Mohamad
The Prime Minister

EVENT: On The Occasion Of The 30th Anniversary Of Asean

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TIME:

Thirty years ago today, the Bangkok Declaration establishing the Association of South East Asian Nations was signed. In doing so, the founding nations had a very clear vision and aspiration of what ASEAN should be. Today, ASEAN has emerged as one of the more successful regional groupings in the world. For this, we must be thankful to and be proud of the foresight of those leaders who lead the way.

2. Just two weeks ago we saw the formal entry of Laos and Myanmar into ASEAN which was a welcome event as ASEAN celebrates its 30th Anniversary. We are a step closer towards a fully united South East Asia. I am confident that our enlarged Association will continue to be the bedrock of the region's stability and the driving force for its prosperity.

3. Indeed ASEAN has now come of age. The world recognises us as a model of peaceful coexistence and cooperation within a region which has resulted in strong economic growth and prosperity. From an initial membership of five we are now nine, bringing together almost all the South East Asian countries. Our voice is heard, our views taken heed of and our harmonious coexistence held upon a shining example. Our people are our greatest asset, believing in working hard to improve our lives and to carve a niche for ourselves in this competitive and shrinking world. For most of us there is already some prosperity, and for our newer members it would not be far away.

4. There are many things to be grateful for in ASEAN. Success does not come without effort but at the same time we are also fortunate that we are not unduly hindered by problems of our own making like war and intractable civil strife. We understand the need for political stability in order for our peoples to have a good life.

5. Much of what we have achieved have been due to the spirit of ASEAN, doing things the ASEAN way which means practising consultation and seeking consensus by exercising self-restraint and maintaining mutual respect. There have been times when our very existence and cohesiveness had been put to the test, but we have always survived and come out stronger. In all our undertakings and ventures, the spirit of ASEAN togetherness prevailed and has been our guiding principle. We shall continue to nurture and nourish this principle to ensure greater prosperity and strength.

6. As we celebrate the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN, we should also reflect on some of the problems and difficulties we have had in the past so that we can avoid their repetition in the future. The world today is more complex

and demanding. As we stand on the threshold of the 21st Century we must be fully equipped to manage the challenges that will come with the new millennium. With the right attitude, knowledge and commitment, and drawing from ASEAN's past lessons we will be able to surmount the challenges that may emerge.

7. If the people is our greatest asset, then our youths, are our greatest investment for the future. Let us guide them in the best possible way so that they can contribute to the future of our region. Let us guide them in the ASEAN way with the ASEAN spirit so that they will become good, responsible and worthy citizens of ASEAN. Our experience in leading ASEAN over the past 30 years should enable us to map the way for those who will be taking up the task of creating a more cohesive and better ASEAN.

8. Malaysia is proud to be a member of ASEAN and to have contributed something towards the success of the Association. We are fully committed to the goals and ideals of ASEAN and we are confident that ASEAN will achieve greater progress in future. Let us work hard to enable it to continue to be a dynamic Association.

9. I take this opportunity to wish all citizens of ASEAN a joyous celebration of the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN.

Thank you.