

SPEECH BY: Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohamad
(Prime Minister)

EVENT: The Supreme Court of Justice

VENUE: MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY

DATE: 02 Oct 1997

TIME:

Excellency and other members of this distinguished body. I wish to express my appreciation to Your Excellency for your very kind remarks and for your warm words of welcome to us. My delegation and I have come to Uruguay with the firm desire to strengthen the warm and friendly relations that happily exist between our two countries. We want to seek out new opportunities for cooperation. We want to exchange ideas and views with you and share experiences as to how we can better face the challenges of development and change.

2. Part of that process is understanding your judicial system and I am happy that we now have the opportunity to get to know you better. For cultural and historical reasons both our countries have different judicial systems. If we are to encourage greater trade and investments, there needs to be greater understanding of our respective judicial and legal systems. And so I hope that this area of our bilateral relations will not be neglected.

3. As I mentioned in my speech last night, Malaysia does not have a long history of relations with Latin America. We are in the process of learning, of discovering about this fascinating continent which is alive with new ideas and new hopes. It is clear however that Latin America is about to enter the most dynamic period ever in its history.

4. For us in Asia, that is good news and we rejoice with you. We have never subscribed to the notion that development is a zero sum game -- that your gain is our loss. On the contrary, we believe that a rich and prosperous Latin America is good for Asia and vice-versa. And so we must encourage and support each other in whatever way we can.

5. One of the big issues being discussed in the region today is the role of the judiciary. Please allow me to offer some thoughts on this issue from the perspective of development. It is often forgotten that a prerequisite for development is a judicial system that understands and supports the aspirations of the people

for both development and justice. Justice without development will leave us impoverished and at the mercy of other nations. I have always argued that poverty is the greatest injustice of all. On the other hand, development without justice cannot be sustained in the long run. And so I believe that the challenge for the judiciary particularly in developing countries is to be supportive of the response to both the demand for justice and for development in equal measure.

6. Thank you again for welcoming me and the members of my delegation to the Supreme Court of Uruguay today. I hope that I shall have the pleasure of receiving you in Malaysia in the not too distant future. International relations is after all not the preserve of politicians, diplomats and businessmen only but of judges and lawyers as well. There cannot be treaties and agreements between nations if there is no legal basis. And laws and legal frameworks are your area and expertise.

FILE: SP0210