

EMBARGO: 10.30 p.m, Monday, 4.1.88 :

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SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE
THE PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA
~~DATO SERI DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD~~
AT THE OFFICIAL DINNER IN HONOUR OF H.E. MR. GIOVANNI GORIA
THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY
AT SRI PERDANA, KUALA LUMPUR
ON MONDAY, 4TH. JANUARY, 1988
AT 8.30 P.M.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome Your Excellency, Madame Goria and distinguished members of your delegation to Malaysia. My wife and I are very honoured to have Your Excellency and Madame Goria here tonight. Your Excellency's visit is indeed a significant event as this is the first official visit by a Prime Minister of Italy to Malaysia. I hope that during your short stay in Malaysia you will be able to see a little bit of our country and observe our multi-racial way of life.

2. Italy is no alien land to Malaysia. Our ties go back a long way. Some of us associate Italy in the context of the arts, accomplished music, an important nexus of European culture. Italy also represents a mature nation, figuring frequently in world history, rising and ebbing and ultimately emerging as one of the more technologically advanced nations in modern times.

3. Relations between Italy and Malaysia has been growing steadily over the last two decades. Our relations are founded upon the commitment to raise the economic and social well-being of our peoples, the pursuit of close regional cooperation in our respective regions and the commitment to a peaceful resolution of international conflicts. It is our hope to see that our relations be further consolidated through more exchanges of visits between the leaders and peoples of Italy and Malaysia.

4. Your visit here, Excellency, has given us the opportunity to exchange views on bilateral matters as well as on regional and international issues. I believe there is considerable scope for the expansion of our bilateral relations, particularly in the field of trade, investment and economic cooperation. These are areas where the private sector of both sides could play an important role by taking advantage of the various opportunities available. Only through such mutually beneficial endeavours can we add substance to our relations in order to further strengthen the foundations already laid. In this connection, I welcome the presence in your delegation of so many distinguished members of the Italian private sector. I do hope they would follow-up on the discussions held with their Malaysian counterparts.

5. Malaysia is fully aware of Italy's pivotal role in the founding of the European Economic Community. As a member of

ASEAN we are particularly pleased with the frequent contacts which have been established between the two sides within the framework of the ASEAN-EEC Dialogues. The cooperative endeavours between our respective regions have been encouraging and I am confident that the existing ASEAN-EEC machinery would contribute positively towards realising our potential and further augmenting cooperation at all levels.

6. Like other developing countries Malaysia's economy is dependent on the export of primary products. What we are concerned with are the problems of tariff and non-tariff barriers which negate the fundamental principles of international trade. The basic issue is that of market access. It is therefore our hope that developed members of GATT would take the necessary measures to harmonise tariff rates for tropical products to the lowest prevailing rates in their respective countries, and to reduce agricultural subsidies which have caused massive distortions in world agricultural trade. I trust that Italy itself would help to persuade the European Community to actively participate in the current Multi-lateral Trade Negotiations with a view to liberalising trade in agriculture.

7. We are living today in a world where international peace and security is bedevilled not only by regional conflicts but also by major power rivalry. Developing countries have become mere pawns in this game. The efforts at reaching a satisfactory solution and an end to such

problems as Kampuchea, Afghanistan, the Middle-East and South Africa are continuously hampered by built-in complexities and special interests. But whilst our influence is limited, Malaysia is fully committed as a nation to making our views heard in the relevant international fora in the interests of attaining fairness and justice and the preservation of the highly cherished principles of international relations.

8. As a country close to the Kampuchean conflict, Malaysia shall continue to intensify its efforts, together with the other ASEAN members, in finding a durable and comprehensive political solution to the Kampuchean problem, so that peace and stability will return not only to Kampuchea but also to the region as a whole. In this connection, we welcome the latest initiative of Prince Sihanouk to seek a political solution through national reconciliation.

9. In the backdrop of uncertainties in international relations and security, it is a matter of some satisfaction to see East-West relations taking a positive turn with the recent signing of the INF Treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union. The conclusion of such a treaty is indeed a good beginning and a significant step away from nuclear brinkmanship. In fact, given sincerity on both sides, we may gradually progress towards a nuclear-weapons free world in our lifetime. Efforts to minimise the danger of a nuclear conflict however should not increase the risk

of conventional war. The process of disarmament should of course not be confined to Europe alone. It should extend to Asia as soon as possible, for nuclear warfare cannot be restricted to any region. A nuclear war will be a world war.

10. I would like to once again express my pleasure in welcoming you and the distinguished members of your delegation to Malaysia and I hope your stay in Malaysia has been both enjoyable and memorable.

Prime Minister's Office,
Kuala Lumpur.