

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

EVENT: THE WORLD CUP GOLF MALAYSIA, 1999 OPENING DINNER

VENUE: THE PALACE OF THE GOLDEN HORSES THE MINES RESORT CITY, KUALA LUMPUR

DATE: 17 NOV 1999

TIME:

On behalf of all Malaysians, and as Patron of the World Cup Golf Malaysia, 1999 (WCG '99), I wish to welcome all participants to this prestigious tournament. Malaysia is truly honoured to play host to this World Cup Golf for the first time since its inception in 1953 which began as the Canada Cup in Montreal.

2. The WCG '99 was conceived as a promotion of international goodwill and it has been proven that golf could be an effective instrument for promoting international relations where people of diverse cultures, beliefs and nationalities could come together in a sporting atmosphere. Indeed this tournament provides a significant forum for various countries to meet, compete and enhance the spirit of friendship and cordiality.

3. Golf in Malaysia is fast catching up. The rapid development of golf courses in Malaysia in the last 10 years is evidence of this popularity. Currently there are more than 200 golf courses in the country. The interest among Malaysians to play golf is most encouraging. This has been made especially possible with golf institutions providing necessary leadership and corporate bodies in making available financial sponsorships in big events such as this. It is no surprise then that with all the increased interest among corporate executives and investors, golf clubs have mushroomed everywhere. Malaysia is set to establish itself as a golfing paradise in the region.

4. The Government is keen to develop golf-related tourism as part of its policy of developing tourism since it is one of the most important contributors to foreign exchange earnings. Golfing as a sport is linked closely with tourism. This is because tourists are greatly attracted to the beautifully landscaped greenery of the golf courses and the holiday resorts which are usually developed together in Malaysia. Thus, golfers and tourists can find both accommodation and golfing facilities in an attractive surrounding while being able to savour the culinary and cultural

heritage of Malaysia. I may add here that Malaysia currently is a very inexpensive destination thanks to the devaluation of the Malaysian currency.

5. The Organising Committee of the World Cup Golf, Malaysia 1999 has adopted a special theme for the event -- 'Go for the Green'. It is most befitting the greenery of Malaysia's tropical rainforests and the importance of environment preservation. The theme is most consistent with sustainable development, a principle Malaysia has always adhered to.

6. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the International Golf Association for the confidence it has in Malaysia for organising this event. I also wish to thank the various sponsors involved, especially PROTON Berhad which is the presenting sponsor for their support.

7. To all the tourists who are here especially for the tournament, do take some time off to see the rest of Malaysia and its cultural diversity and do experience the Malaysian hospitality.

8. I am not a golfer but I do encourage golfing because I like the green of the golf courses. I hope everyone including Mr Tiger Woods and other famous golfers will enjoy this competition and your brief stay in Malaysia.

9. I wish everyone good golfing and the best of luck in your competition.