

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

EVENT: THE OFFICIAL DINNER HOSTED BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. MARI ALKATIRI
PRIME MINISTER OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE

VENUE: BALLROOM, HOTEL TIMOR, DILI

DATE: 23 OCT 2003

TIME:

Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for your kind words of welcome. It is indeed a pleasure for me to be in Dili. I am delighted that I have been able to undertake this visit to Timor-Leste before I leave office.

2. On behalf of my wife and members of my delegation, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you, your Government and the people of Timor-Leste for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements extended to us since our arrival in your beautiful country.

3. Timor-Leste is an extraordinary and remarkable country. Your strength lies in your people, whose resourcefulness, determination and grit overcame 24 years of struggle. Your country has been a symbol of courage. Timor-Leste can stand tall and proud, as equals among nations. Malaysia is proud to have been given the privilege of welcoming Timor-Leste as the newest member of the Non Aligned Movement at the last NAM Summit held in Kuala Lumpur last February.

4. I am happy to note the positive trend in the bilateral relations between Malaysia and Timor-Leste over the last three years. At the same time, I believe much more need to be done if we are to realise the full potential of our bilateral economic interaction which is negligible.

5. The appointment of the first Ambassador of Malaysia to Timor-Leste is a testament to the strength of our relationship, which characterises the warm friendship since diplomatic ties were established through the Liaison Office in 2001, which was eventually upgraded to an Embassy last May 2002. Our bilateral ties, premised on mutual respect and understanding has seen remarkable progress since the establishment of your Embassy in Kuala Lumpur in October 2002.

6. Malaysia follows with keen interest Timor-Leste's efforts to improve the economic and social well being of her people. Timor-Leste has enormous potential with her untapped natural resources, and more importantly its young

human resources.

7. I had an eventful day today. After the welcoming ceremony, I had the opportunity of calling on His Excellency President Xanana Gusmao. We discussed many issues of mutual concerns. I also had the opportunity of having a good, frank and substantive discussion with you, Mr. Prime Minister. The discussion continued from where we left off after your visit to Malaysia in August 2002. We had a frank, fruitful and meaningful discussion on various issues affecting our countries and the ways and means to further improve the existing cordial ties between the two countries.

8. The task now is to implement those decision and agreements reached today. We should enhance relations beyond the traditional bilateral field to include other areas such as trade, culture, education, tourism, human resource development, youth and sports, oil and gas. I was also given the honour and privilege today to address the Council of Ministers and Members of Parliament. I am happy to be able to share Malaysia's experience in nation building.

9. This afternoon we also witnessed the signing of the Economic, Technical, Scientific and Cultural Agreement. The agreement reflects the importance and strong commitment that both our nations have to strengthen our bilateral relationship.

10. With the signing of the Economic, Technical, Scientific and Cultural Agreement, I would like to propose that Malaysia play host to the first Joint Commission Meeting between Malaysia and Timor-Leste at a date to be mutually decided.

11. Foreign Investment is always a major factor to expedite the growth of one's economy. Malaysia has been able to attract many foreign investors to Malaysia. Malaysia is prepared to share its experience and knowledge with Timor-Leste on ways to attract foreign investments. For these reasons, I have brought along with my delegation our captains of Industries. During the "Malaysia - Timor-Leste Business Dialogue and Luncheon" held this afternoon, I am told that they have initiated several business ventures and formed a good network. Their presence in Timor-Leste for the last two days, will hopefully give rise to more opportunities to find new markets for Malaysian goods and increase trade and investments opportunities between both our countries.

12. This afternoon too, I had the honour of laying the foundation stone for the future site of the Embassy of Malaysia. I am grateful to the Government of Timor-Leste for allocating that beautiful piece of land fronting the sea. I understand that we're going to be neighbours, as the Government of Timor-Leste plans to build its new

building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation next to our Embassy.

13. I am also gratified to witness the naming of Malaysia Street (Avenida da Malaysia) in front of the future site of our Embassy. This is a magnificent gesture and again reflects the strong bond of friendship between Malaysia and Timor-Leste.

14. As developing countries, Malaysia and Timor-Leste should develop strategic alliances and enhance cooperation in areas that could benefit both our countries and peoples. In this direction, Malaysia is committed to cooperate with Timor-Leste in this noble endeavour to bring peace and progress to Timor-Leste and to assist in the development of your country. Within the context of South-south cooperation and premised upon our belief in the slogan, "Prosper Thy Neighbour", Malaysia stands ready to share under our Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP), our facilities and experiences in governance and development. As of today, about 150 Timorese have benefited from the programme. This we hope will contribute to your human resource development.

15. Malaysia is happy with its participation in the peace operations under the umbrella of the United Nations in Timor-Leste. To date, more than 200 Malaysian police have served under various capacities in the UNPOL (UN Police) and FPU (Formed Police Unit). Malaysians are also serving in various UN agencies. Several Malaysian Prison Officers are sharing their experience in prison management with their counterparts here.