

Tale ved lunsj gitt av Norges Eksportråd i Malaysia 14. januar 1985.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to address you on this occasion as tradesmen and explorers. Tradesmen were always explorers in some sense or another, by sailing or directing the ships or by managing the caravan. I need not mention the numerous more modern features of these ancient professions.

In April last year a large business delegation accompanied your Prime Minister on his visit to Norway. The inquisitive minds of Malaysian business elicited a serious, positive response from their Norwegian counterparts, which are well represented here today.

Norway is still far from being among your most important trading partners, and most likely never will be. But apart from being a reliable importer of several of your raw materials, we also play a role in certain branches of your export industry - for instance: we are the number-one importer of Malaysian footwear, receiving more than 40 per cent of that industry's export. Norway only has a population of four million, but with pretty high purchasing power, so there will always be opportunities for high-quality, well-marketed industrial commodities. We have a very liberal trade.

Apart from being a market, although somewhat limited in size, we are also exporters of just about everything from canned sardines to huge concrete offshore platforms, from shipping to consultancy services. Based on our experience from jobs in our own country and abroad, further developed through costly research and development, we are today able to compete internationally on equal terms in several fields within, for instance, the hydropower and offshore sectors, the two sectors that have been the themes of today's two workshops.

The choice was in fact based on your Prime Minister's special interest in these sectors during his official visit to Norway in April last year. Moreover, during the past decade we have done jobs and delivered equipment to Malaysia for hydropower and offshore installations in the face of tough competition. We felt that this would be a convenient time for a "follow-up" and for forming new ties and affiliations.

Prime Minister Datu Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's visit to Norway, together with a delegation of leading industrialists and businessmen, represented a major step towards bringing Malaysian and Norwegian enterprises closer together, and served as an inspiration to us for closer cooperation in many fields. Some Norwegian investors have already started enterprises in Malaysia, and I hope more will do so after my visit. This would be in keeping with my Government's expressed desire to support an ongoing process of internationalisation of Norwegian enterprises. My impression from conversations

in Oslo and now in Kuala Lumpur is that your authorities would also welcome closer relations between Malaysian and Norwegian business representatives, especially the transfer of Norwegian advanced technology to Malaysia, preferably through joint ventures. Wherever it is possible and to the mutual benefit of our two countries, my Government will do what it can to support such initiatives.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to propose a toast to development of the future relations between our two countries.