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Venue : PRINCE HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR
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**Title : OPENING CEREMONY OF 10TH ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM (ARF)
HEADS OF DEFENCE UNIVERSITIES/COLLEGES/INSTITUTES
MEETING**

Excellencies, ARF Heads of Defence Universities/Colleges/Institutes, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning.

1. It gives me great honour, on behalf of the Malaysian government and the Ministry of Defence, to bid a warm welcome and "selamat datang" to friends and colleagues from the Asia Pacific Region to the 10th ARF Heads of Defence universities/ colleges/ institutes meeting (meeting) in Kuala Lumpur. We are indeed very pleased and honoured to be the host for this meaningful occasion. The Malaysian Armed Forces Defence College (MAFDC) has been given the privilege to represent Malaysia in organising this important annual event.

2. This meeting in Kuala Lumpur from 7 to 9 September 2006 will continue to uphold the objective of providing a platform to reaffirm the continuing relevance of Asean Regional Forum (ARF) as the key multilateral security forum in the Asia Pacific Region. Your presence will help to strengthen the aim of this meeting i.e. of further military-to-military dialogue, cooperation and confidence building through exchanges in the areas of military education and strategic related issues.

3. The Asean Regional Forum, being a multi-lateral institution has been able to strengthen the mutual understanding, trust and confidence amongst its members. Over the years, discussions on security related issues have continued in a more open and candid manner due to the establishment of trust amongst its members. Malaysia welcomes this healthy development and will continue to give support towards a successful ARF. We are optimistic that future forums will continue to develop into a more cordial and conducive environment in line with the 'Asean way'.

4. The theme for this meeting will focus on the topic of "cooperation in countering non-traditional threats". In the context of the changing security environment which effects the region, discussion of non-traditional threats is a relevant security issue. Through these discussions members will be able to share their thoughts, and exchange their views which will enhance further understanding of each others' security concerns. As a majority of participants of this meeting are esteemed educators from respective defence institutions, their participation will be beneficial to the development of knowledge for their armed forces.

5. The post-cold war global security environment Continues to be a challenging one thus creating an air of uncertainty. For instance, the conflicts in middle East have added more uncertainty to the well being of small and helpless nations. The Asean Pacific Region is not free from conflict either. There are on going sensitive security issues around us such as overlapping claims in the spratlys, nuclear proliferation and transnational security issues. Through this forum we can sit down together to understand the root causes of these security issues, create awareness and build up confidence which will allow us to narrow the gap of uncertainty.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

6. Malaysia will be celebrating her 49th independence anniversary on 31st august this year. Despite our Encouraging development and convincing economic growth We have got a long way to go towards becoming an industrialised nation. We place security as an important agenda in our national development. We are sharing land and sea borders with the majority of the Asean members which requires us to have continued bilateral and multilateral working relations for our future well-being. We will continue to participate in regional forums and be actively involved in peace missions such as the International Monitoring Team (IMT) and peacekeeping missions under the United Nations Umbrella.

7. This meeting has been programmed with a busy schedule to allow more interaction on the themes selected. With 26 nations from the Asia Pacific Region participating in this meeting I am confident that we will be able to engage in fruitful discussion, interaction and most of all building up a network amongst colleagues from ARF Members. I am sure the short time available will be Well spent and participants will be able to bring the knowledge and experience that you have gathered back home.

8. Finally, I am hopeful that your short stay in Kuala Lumpur will be a memorable and enjoyable one. On behalf of the government of Malaysia and the Ministry Of Defence we wish to thank all of you for coming all the way to support us in organising this meeting. Your presence and participation are much appreciated and we look forward to see you again in the next meeting.

Thank you.