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"DEFENCE IN A CHANGING AND COMPLEX WORLD"

Yang Berhormat
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Deputy Minister of Defence

Yang Berbahagia
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Admiral Tan Sri Dato' Sri Mohd Anwar bin Haji Mohd Nor
Chief of Defence Forces

Yang Berbahagia
Tan Sri Asmat bin Kamaludin
Chairman of Defence Services Asia Exhibition and Conference

Members of the Organizing Committee

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Salam Sejahtera and A Very Good Evening,

On behalf of the Government of Malaysia, I bid you all Selamat Datang to this 10th Defence Services Asia Exhibition and Conference, or DSA 2006.

I am delighted to be here once again, as it affords me the opportunity to renew friendships and forge new associations. Looking around, I can see many familiar faces and I believe this year's enlarged contingent includes many new foreign participants, government ministers, officials and senior officers of regional armed forces as well as other regulatory authorities. I also note, with delight, the increased presence of corporate representatives at this year's show. My deepest appreciation goes to all of you for your presence at DSA 2006. By being here, it indeed reflects your continued support, and professionalism.

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This DSA 2006 is especially significant, as it celebrates its tenth show. From a humble beginning in 1988, the show has become firmly established as a major meeting point for regional governments' planners and as one of the world's leading showcases for defence and security equipment vendors.

I have been made to understand, of some 20 defence exhibitions scheduled to be held throughout the world this year, the DSA '06 Exhibition and Conference is among the most significant. It is not only the largest event of its kind in Asia, but also the second largest defence and security exhibition in the world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At present, we are living in not only a changing world, but a highly complex one. It is a world full of paradox and contradictions. We have seen peace and war all at the same time. Despite man's technological feats, we are still grappling with diseases, poverty and deprivation and of course conflicts. While one may be sanguine with the 21st Century, so far, it is like being on a rollercoaster with no end in sight.

Following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, a symbol of the ideological divide, the world has witnessed the unleashing of the Pandora's Box. Many domestic intra-state issues were left in abeyance during the long years of the Cold War, fermenting, waiting for the right moment to burst out. Burst out they did, with a fury and vengeance.

We saw carnage in the territories of the former Yugoslavia with ethnic cleansing, mindless and senseless slaughter in Rwanda, and the end of the dark ages in Taliban's Afghanistan. We have seen people blowing themselves up from Moscow, Madrid to Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and London.

At present, we are witness to a state of lawlessness and indiscriminate killings in Iraq and the country is fast deteriorating into a state of civil war. The only superpower, with all the military power at its disposal, is slowly losing a war which was unwinnable to begin with. The US military is being defeated by suicide bombers and there appears to be little that sophistication and high tech can do against a low level and low intensity methodology.

It would appear that it is *deja vu*.

In the 1960s, during the Vietnam War, I recall people talking of the most powerful military in the world being defeated by soldiers in pyjamas. The B-52s had tried to destroy the Ho Chi Minh trail. It was like killing a fly with a sledgehammer. All the hardware and sophistication of the might of the US military was unable to defeat a much weaker force.

It all sounds too familiar today. One would have thought that we have learned from the painful lessons of Vietnam. Unfortunately we have not.

As if the situation in Iraq is not bad enough, we are poised for another potential conflict – we are confronted with some kind of a Mexican standoff between the United States and Iran over Tehran's nuclear programme. Among other things, this has caused global oil prices to sky-rocket to an all-time high of above USD70 per barrel. We are all suffering from this impasse.

There is so much talk of the spectre of terrorism. To me terrorism is only a means to an end. What we need to address is the rise of extremism – in particular religious extremism, a phenomenon that is gaining currency in many parts of the world. We need to fight this for if we do not, then we will all fall victim to this tyranny of the minority.

I shudder to anticipate what will happen next and where and when the next places on earth will go up in smoke.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

How do we make sense of what is happening around us today and how do we plan for the future? While we can strive for the ideals, I believe we must also be realistic in our appraisals. It is not to search for a world with no conflicts, but rather to build a world where we can prevent conflicts and if they so break out, then we should work to end them soonest.

I believe there are several things that we should work towards, either as individual states or collectively, as part of the international community.

Firstly, we must continue to strengthen our institutions, at home, regionally or internationally, be they political, economic, and financial as well as that of the society. Domestically, we need to build our nations, in particular, to develop our institutions, such as the legislature, judiciary and the administration. We need to strengthen the rule of law thereby increasing public confidence. National strength and resilience are needed in order to fight extremism. We have seen the occurrence of weak and failed states and often they become root causes of conflicts. The legitimacy of governments must be credible for if they are not, then states will become vulnerable and often conflicts follow. Sustainable stability is what we should strive for. Stability through oppression is never sustainable.

At the regional and international levels, we must also continue to build institutions, whether ASEAN in the case of Southeast Asia or the United Nations, for the global community.

In connection to this, it is my firm belief that we need to continue to modernise our military forces, not as potential aggressors but rather as peace guarantors. I like to regard our military and armed forces as custodians of peace. The Military today must play their role as deterrent forces and to guarantee peace in the region and in the world. Their military capability should reflect deterrent postures and it is through this, that we may be able to ensure peace.

In developing our military, we should strive for a balanced force and to have a multiple capability in order to meet a whole range of threats from conventional to unconventional forms of warfare.

In addition, I would like to see many more cooperative ventures amongst the military forces in the region. The armed forces should built upon the strength that they have and share. I am of the firm opinion that the surest way to prevent wars is to get the military to cooperate with one another. The invitation as observers during military exercises is significant and should be encouraged further. Military diplomacy must be encouraged to complement political diplomacy.

Secondly, we must increase our knowledge and understanding of what is happening around us. To be able to comprehend and make sense of our surroundings are critical for us. It is only through a greater understanding will we be able to prevail. Therefore, what we must do is to seek knowledge and to establish networks amongst us. The more contacts we have, the greater will the exchange of information and knowledge be. In this respect, shows such as the DSA provide a golden opportunity for all of us to better understand one another as well as to have a better appreciation of each others' defence needs and requirements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is difficult these days to be optimistic, especially on a daily basis we read about death taking place in some parts of the globe. It is indeed hard these days to find an oasis of peace and tranquility. We either face conflicts or we face a multitude of challenges. Such is the nature of the world we live in. Whether we define war in a Clausewitzian sense, 'as an extension of politics by other means' or that 'peace is a period in between wars' is less relevant. What is more significant is our ability to overcome our own fears and that of others. It is always a sad day for mankind when we have to resort to the use of force, for it demonstrates our inability to talk to one another and that we have failed to preserve peace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Within the above context, it is shows like DSA '06 that play an invaluable role in exchanging ideas for defence and security purveyors and procurers alike. Through such shows, we create platforms for greater cooperation amongst us and hopefully, greater understanding.

Allow me to take this opportunity to wish all our guests – visitors as well as exhibitors every success over the next four days and a pleasant stay in our little oasis of peace.

Lastly, but by no means the least, I wish to congratulate the organisers for yet another grand and successful DSA Exhibition and Conference and I look forward to DSA 2008 and beyond.

Thank you.