

**REMARKS BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE CONFERENCE DINNER IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE 11 NIKKEI
CONFERENCE AT TOKYO
25 MAY 2005**

HIS EXCELLENCY JUNICHIRO KOIZUMI
PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN;

MR* RYOKI SUGITA
PRESIDENT & CEO
NIHON KEIZAI SHIMBUN INC.;

EXCELLENCIES;

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS;

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

LET ME BEGIN BY THANKING NIHON KEIZAI SHIMBUN AND IN PARTICULAR, MR. RYOKI SUGITA, PRESIDENT AND C.E.O OF NIKKEI KEIZAI SHIMBUN FOR INVITING ME TO SAY A FEW A FEW WORDS AS GUEST OF HONOUR AT THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE DINNER. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO EXTEND MY SINCERE THANKS AND APPRECIATION TO HIS EXCELLENCY JUNICHIRO KOIZUMI, PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN, FOR HONOURING ALL OF US WITH HIS PRESENCE THIS EVENING.

2. THE NIKKEI CONFERENCE IS INTO ITS 11.. YEAR. IT IS AN ANNUAL EVENT THAT PROVIDES A USEFUL FORUM NOT ONLY FOR LEADERS BUT ALSO FOR ACADEMICIANS AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE ASIAN REGION TO GET TOGETHER TO DISCUSS, EXCHANGE AND PROMOTE IDEAS AND VIEWS ON VARIOUS ISSUES FACING THE REGION. IT SERVES ALSO TO FOSTER CLOSER TIES BETWEEN JAPAN AND ITS NEIGHBOURS AS WELL AS TO DEEPEN MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AMONG THE COUNTRIES IN THE REGION.

3. THIS YEAR'S THEME, "CHARTING A COURSE FOR ASIAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION" IS INDEED RELEVANT AT A TIME WHEN THERE IS SO MUCH EXPECTATION AND FOCUS ON THE ASIAN REGION. TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC INTEGRATION, WE MUST CREATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CAPITAL AND BUILD A COMMUNITY WHOSE PRIMARY PURPOSE IS THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF ALL NATIONS AND PEOPLES OF OUR REGION. FURTHERMORE, WE MUST SEEK TO BUILD OUR ECONOMIES AND PROSPER OUR PEOPLE THROUGH MAINTAINING AND STRENGTHENING ECONOMIC LINKS NOT ONLY WITHIN OUR REGION AND TERRITORIES BUT ALSO WITH OTHER NATIONS AND REGIONS OF THE WORLD. GIVEN THE ECONOMIC DYNAMISM OF THE ASIAN ECONOMIES AND MOVES TOWARDS FURTHER INTEGRATION, THE ECONOMIC LINKS CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE INTERTWINED IN THE NEAR IF NOT IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

4. AS I MENTIONED IN MY KEYNOTE ADDRESS THIS MORNING, THE COURSE OF ASIAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION SHOULD AND WILL PROCEED ON A WIDE FRONT, AND THAT THE CONTINUING DYNAMISM OF ASEAN COUNTRIES AND THE COMMITMENT OF THE PLUS THREE COUNTRIES TO ASIAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION WILL BE CRUCIAL. WE MUST THEREFORE ALSO ENSURE THAT WE LIVE SECURELY IN A COMMUNITY THAT FOSTERS PEACE, PROSPERITY AND PROGRESS* WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO DISCHARGE AND A CONTRIBUTION TO MAKE, NOT ONLY FOR OUR THE PRESENT POPULATION BUT ALSO FOR OUR CHILDREN AND OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

5. EFFORTS TO ENHANCE ECONOMIC RELATIONS AMONG COUNTRIES OF THE REGION HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGING. A.F.T.A, JAPAN'S C.E.P/F.T.A - NEGOTIATIONS WITH ASEAN COUNTRIES AND BILATERAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS (E.P.A) ARE BUILDING BLOCKS TOWARDS THE CREATION OF A FREE TRADE ARRANGEMENT IN THIS REGION. IN THIS CONNECTION, I AM HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE THAT PRIME MINISTER JUNICHIRO KOIZUMI AND I HAVE ENDORSED, TODAY, THE AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE REACHED BY MALAYSIA AND JAPAN, ON MAJOR ELEMENTS OF THE JAPAN-MALAYSIA ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (J.M.E.P.A) WHICH WILL BE SIGNED IN MALAYSIA IN DECEMBER DURING THE FIRST EAST ASIA SUMMIT.

6. ON BEHALF OF THE LEADERS AND PARTICIPANTS PRESENT THIS EVENING, LET ME CONCLUDE BY THANKING NIHON KEIZAI SHIMBUN FOR HOSTING THIS DINNER. LET ME ALSO THANK NIHON KEIZAI SHIMBUN FOR THE EXCELLENT ARRANGEMENTS AND THE GENEROUS HOSPITALITY EXTENDED TO ALL OF US DURING THIS CONFERENCE. I WISH ALL OF YOU SUCCESS IN YOUR DELIBERATIONS FOR THE REST OF THE CONFERENCE PROGRAMME.

THANK YOU.