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( PRIME MINISTER )

EVENT: THE OFFICIAL DINNER IN HONOUR OF HIS EXCELLENCY  
MR. CHUAN LEEKPAI PRIME MINISTER OF THAILAND

VENUE: SRI PERDANA, KUALA LUMPUR

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TIME:

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to welcome Your Excellency and distinguished members of your delegation to Kuala Lumpur on your first official visit to Malaysia since assuming office as Prime Minister of Thailand. We view the presence of several of your Cabinet colleagues and important members of the private sector in your delegation as very significant, symbolising the close economic and political relations that exist between our two countries. I look forward to the opportunity of having close consultations and exchange of views with you during the course of this visit on ways to further enhance these relations.

2. Built firmly on the foundation of close traditional ties and in the spirit of good neighbourliness, Malaysia and Thailand have, over the years, built an impressive network of cooperation. This has brought about great success in the fight against communist terrorists along our common border, which culminated in the elimination of the communist threat in 1990. We have equally benefitted from our cooperation in such fields as anti-drug trafficking measures, agriculture, transport and communications.

3. It is indeed gratifying that the Malaysia-Thailand Joint Authority, the establishment of which was decided in 1979 to jointly explore and exploit non-living resources in the overlapping continental shelf area of both countries, has now been formed and its headquarters established in Kuala Lumpur. I am confident that the Joint Authority will yet be another example of tangible cooperation between our two countries.

4. Trade between the two countries has also increased steadily over the years. In 1987, total bilateral trade amounted to 2.4 billion Malaysian Ringgit and in 1991 it was 5.4 billion Malaysian Ringgit. Thailand today is Malaysia's second largest trading partner in ASEAN and 14th largest foreign investor.

5. Notwithstanding these impressive range of cooperation, more need to be done in order to tap the full potential of trade and economic opportunities available in each other's country. For this reason I am particularly happy that you

have included in your delegation prominent leaders from the government as well as the private sector. I hope that this visit would give them the opportunity to learn more about the opportunities available in this country and would spur them to further strengthen the economic and trade links between Malaysia and Thailand. The ending of the communist threat along our common border had opened new scope for co-operation both at government and private sector levels in the economic as well as social fields.

6. The need for closer trade and economic ties between our two countries and between ASEAN as a whole cannot be over-emphasised. In line with the decision of the Fourth ASEAN Summit, we have moved towards the implementation of the CEPT arrangement and eventually AFTA. For AFTA to be meaningful, trade and investment between ASEAN nations must be substantially increased. I submit that earnest efforts in this direction must be made now so that ASEAN can quickly grow into a truly dynamic organisation capable of meeting the challenges posed by the emergence of regional economic groupings in other parts of the world. We must be prepared to examine different concepts and levels of cooperation that would contribute to the strengthening of ASEAN as a whole.

Malaysia's keenness to discuss with the Governments of Thailand and Indonesia on a sub-regional approach to economic cooperation, specifically the Northern Growth Triangle involving the northern states of Malaysia and the provinces of South Thailand and Northern Sumatera, was motivated by this desire. Considering the mutual advantages to be gained, I trust that you, Mr. Prime Minister, would give the idea due consideration and attention. It is only through greater economic strength and cohesion can ASEAN play an effective role in safeguarding its interests in the larger world, including the protection of free trade which is so vital to ASEAN's prosperity.

7. Talking about the protection of free trade, on Malaysia's initiative ASEAN had accepted the concept of an East Asia Economic Caucus and ASEAN officials have been tasked with deliberating on ways to advance and implement the concept, the central objective of which is to provide a forum for consultation on free trade and other related development issues. Let me say how much we appreciate Thailand's support for the concept which we see as vital in the light of the emerging protectionist tendencies among regional economic groupings as well as the uncertainty over the Uruguay Round of GATT multilateral trade negotiations.

8. Looking beyond ASEAN to the other countries of South-east Asia, it is indeed heartening to see the economic transformation taking place in Vietnam, Laos and even Cambodia. Malaysia is happy that, like Thailand, it is also able to assist and contribute in some modest ways to the economic reconstruction of these countries through trade and private investment. We are doing so in the belief that a prosperous and stable Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam closely

linked to ASEAN or even as members of ASEAN would contribute to the peace, stability and prosperity of the entire South-east Asian region. The same goes for Myanmar.

9. It is for this reason that we view with serious concern the refusal of the Khmer Rouge to participate fully in the peace process in Cambodia. Such a stand runs the risk of plunging the country back into a civil war, affecting the peace and stability of the entire region. We would like to appeal to the leaders of Khmer Rouge to return to the peace process and spare the country from turmoil and hardship. While ASEAN has stood firmly behind the efforts of the United Nations to enforce the Paris Agreement, we would like in particular to pay tribute to Thailand for its decision to fully enforce United Nations Security Council trade sanctions against the Khmer Rouge even though some Thai business interests might be affected.

10. Concerned as we are at the situation in Cambodia, it would be difficult for us to ignore the death, deprivation, hunger and blatant violation of human rights taking place in other parts of the world. I am thinking specifically of Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Though we could feel somewhat relieved that the situation in Somalia has improved following the despatch to that country of an international force led by the United States, the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina continues to be grim. Serbian guns continue to pound senselessly on innocent civilians in Sarajevo and other Bosnian-controlled areas. Thousands of Bosnians, Muslim and non-Muslims have been and are being raped, tortured and massacred everyday. How many thousands more must be killed and tortured before the U.N. decide to use force? Peace negotiations have proven futile again and again. Only force can bring about results. We cannot believe that the forces of righteousness will only assert themselves when their quarry will pose no lethal threat to their forces.

11. The tradition of regular exchanges of visits and consultations between the Prime Ministers and other leaders of Malaysia and Thailand has been well-established. This is a tradition that we in Malaysia intend to maintain and nurture, for this is the way it should be among friends and neighbours. It is through such consultations that we have managed to solve many delicate issues between our two countries. So I look forward to more meetings with you and to your future visits to this country. I hope your visit to Malaysia this time, despite its brevity, will be an enjoyable and profitable one and that the reception and hospitality extended to you and members of your delegation will not be found wanting.

12. Being the newly elected Head of Government of an important and fast developing country, high expectations are placed in you by the people of Thailand. You have an enormous task ahead. May I take this occasion to wish you every success in carrying out your responsibilities.

