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PEACE, STABILITY AND PROSPERITY"

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TIME:

There are times in the affairs of mankind when history takes a definite turn. This could be such a time. For much of world's history, Asia was the centre of human civilisation. Asia contributed considerably to the development of the human society and its civilisation. Asia led in the arts and the sciences and the sum total of human knowledge.

2. Asia had its share of wars and violence but by and large it was more peaceful than Europe ever was. Although history books seem to suggest that Asian empires appeared and disappeared with startling rapidity, in fact they were durable, each lasting hundreds of years. And the Imperial courts patronised the arts and the sciences, causing them to bloom. There may be people who think that just because the Cold War is over there is no more history, that history has come to an end. I don't pretend to understand this conclusion. But I think you will agree with me that the end of the Cold War marks the beginning of a new era.

3. You as other movers and makers of East Asia's future should prepare to play a role in the making of this new history, history in which Asia once again becomes the most important cradle of human civilisation.

4. Asian history has for too many hundreds of years been an appendage of European history. Our lives have for much too long been too dependent on the events and aspirations of nations elsewhere.

5. It is time to dedicate ourselves to a non-confrontationist, non-Xenophobic Asian Resurgence, a movement driven not by the outside or by resentment or anger but by our own ambitions for our own people, our own countries and our own region. It is time to commit ourselves to that long and awesome process whose final destination should be a durable and comprehensive Asian Renaissance founded on the finest traditions of Asia and on Asian ethics.

6. The challenges are enormous. Much will depend on how much peace, how much stability and how much prosperity we can generate for our people and for the region in the

decades to come.

7. Obviously, Asia must advance over the broadest geographical front.

8. But I suspect that much of the inspiration, the impetus and the drive for an Asian Renaissance, if it ever were to come, will come from East Asia.

9. Certainly we in East Asia can look back with some degree of pride on what we have been able to achieve over the last few decades. It has been a period of massive trials, tribulations and transformations. Fortunately it has also been a time of achievements most remarkable.

10. Most of the region is now a marketplace -- filled with the ringing sound not of bugles and bullets but of bazaar bargaining and stock market babble, of pile-driving steam hammers, of roads and harbours and magnificent edifices, of progress and growth.

11. There are still disputes and threats and words spoken in anger. But the forces that are at work are not those of war and conquest but those of the market.

12. But not for a century and a half has the strategic environment of East Asia been as good as it is today. We can take reasonable satisfaction from this.

13. Let us nevertheless all regard what we have achieved as only the first installment towards the Asian Renaissance that I speak of.

14. Let me now turn to the third leg of the Asian Resurgence that has already begun and the most basic foundation of the Asian Resurgence yet to come: our dynamism and prosperity.

15. After all the current talk of "the East Asian Economic Miracle", it is important to remind ourselves how often in the past, the leaders in the East threw up their hands in despair, as they predicted not "an East Asian Economic Miracle" but "the East Asian economic morass".

16. At one point or another, every economy in East Asia has been assumed to be economies without hope. A ton of learned treatises explained why we were condemned to economic stagnation or worse. Even Japan had grave doubts about the future of the Japanese economy. Indonesia and South Korea were regarded very much in the way that the worst sub-Saharan African countries are regarded today.

17. The learned analysts have been confounded. This region of yesterday's "dominoes" is now clearly a region of humming dynamos. We will be the primary source of tomorrow's growth and dynamism for the rest of the world.

18. But there can be no resting on laurels. The vast proportion of our peoples are still poor. For them the Economic Miracle, the economic growth rates are quite irrelevant. They have no share in it.

19. But first let us ensure that the present peaceful relation between East Asian states is prolonged. We did not really work towards it. But let us not let the accident of peace be allowed to end in another accident, that of war. We must now actively promote peace between us and peace among us.

20. I think it was the ancient Romans who said, "To have peace you must prepare for war." But really we cannot afford to spend so much on military preparedness. Today's weapon systems are just too costly. We will be bankrupting ourselves trying to deter each other. We will be creating tensions and tensions between nations do not encourage economic investments and long term development plans. We will not have the money for development.

21. It should be the adage of the modern East Asian that: if you want peace, prepare for peace, work for peace, fight for peace -- fight for peace with the resolve and the resources that are generally reserved by nations for the prosecution of war.

22. In the cause of cooperative peace -- cooperation to build an East Asian region of peace, friendship and tranquility -- obviously there are many things we must be prepared to do unilaterally. Reassuring our neighbours, abiding by the rules of international law, negotiation instead of confrontation, ensuring domestic stability and order, behaving with sensitivity and responsibility, and leading by example.

23. Because it does not have the glamour of multilateralism, what is forgotten is that a great deal does hinge on the development of good bilateral relations. All of East Asia will become a region of amity and goodwill if we can build a seamless web of friendly bilateral relations.

24. There are things that we can do at the United Nations and at the global level in pursuit of our commitment to cooperative peace. There are contributions to be made at the minilateral level, in terms of the smaller region, and in terms of the bigger region of East Asia. We in the ASEAN Community can never afford to neglect ASEAN. ASEAN can be a base and an example of a much wider East Asian Cooperation.

25. Choosing to build an East Asian region of peace does not mean turning away from other concerns, other interests and other regions. We should not. Indeed we could not, for all of us are trading nations. We need the rest of the world. The richer they are the better customers they will

be.

26. Fortunately, nations can do many things at the same time. The nations of East Asia have no choice but to do a great many things at the same time if they wish to make the necessary contribution to peace, if they are committed, as they should be, to peace.

27. We have almost all done well if not very well. An East Asian regional economy, integrating at a remarkable rate, is rising at breath-taking speed. The integration has been private sector driven, a source of real strength. In purchasing power parity terms, East Asia is already the largest regional economy in the world, bigger than the Western European or the NAFTA regional economy. In US dollar terms, we will enter the 21st century being the largest regional economy in the world.

28. Will we enter the 21st century as the object of international economic relations or as a full subject of international economic relations? Will we be "the prize", the victim, the economic battlefield of the 21st century, with no say in the wider world, whose rules will be decided elsewhere? Or will we be full-fledged actors, able to play our rightful role in global economics, and able to make the contribution we must to the healthiest development of the commonwealth of man?

29. On the issue of peace, I have spoken of the criticality of self help and unilateral action. I have also stressed the need for cooperation between us.

30. On the issue of prosperity, also, let me stress the importance of self help and individual action.

31. Just as I believe in the importance of ensuring an East Asian system of cooperative peace, I believe in an East Asian system of cooperative prosperity.

32. We will compete against each other. We must compete against each other. But we must also cooperate with each other. And we must establish processes of cooperative prosperity with each other, especially as our competition mounts, especially as our enormous interdependence escalates.

33. This is why I proposed the idea of the East Asia Economic Group, now called the East Asia Economic Caucus.

34. Since the campaign of lies and deliberate disinformation on the EAEG or EAEC concept has been so strong, let me for the umpteenth time explain what is the EAEC.

35. Malaysia is opposed to the creation of a preferential

trading arrangement, or a free trade area, or a customs union, or an economic union for East Asia. What we wish to see is the establishment of a loose consultative forum for East Asia. This forum should have both a regional and an extra-regional agenda.

36. In pursuit of the regional agenda, the economies of East Asia should meet at the ministerial level to discuss how we can enrich our regional economic cooperation. In pursuit of the external, extra-regional agenda, we should discuss how we can cooperate to ensure an open, non-protectionist, healthy global trading and economic system.

37. Second, although regional trade is crucially important, we should not be confined to trade. There is much that can be done with regard to optimising joint development zones, trans-border investment, technology sharing, tourism, even labour flows. The areas for cooperation -- from privatisation to infrastructure development -- are too many to enumerate.

38. Third, on matters related to world trade, we must be champions of free and fair trade.

39. Fourth, we must champion the cause of "open regionalism". If we agree to do something on regional trade, we must ensure no new or higher measure of protection and discrimination should be introduced against those outside East Asia. When others decide to do something on regional trade, we should act to ensure that they too adhere to the principle of open regionalism.

40. Fifth, we should aspire to be a model for true North-South cooperation.

41. Sixth, we must contribute to the security and well-being on the part of all the economies of the region.

42. Seventh, whatever cooperation we embark upon should be grounded in the principles of mutual benefit, mutual respect, egalitarianism, consensus and democracy. Each one of these basic principles is basic in itself.

43. At the same time that we pursue these ends, we should ensure that we are not confrontationist, that we are not bullied and intimidated and that we do not damage ASEAN, APEC, and other established processes; we should not allow others to divide the Pacific, ASEAN or East Asia; we must not be cowed from speaking out against racism, exclusivism and attempts to create closed trading blocs.

44. And finally let us not be afraid to uphold and defend Asian values. We are fortunate in that we could see the results of the experiments with new ideologies and values by others. While the democratic western liberals may claim victory over the socialist/communist ideologies of the East,

the West itself is far from being the ideal society. Materialism and extreme hedonism has resulted in the collapse of the family and the institution of marriage. Homosexuality is of course found in all societies but when it is accepted and even glorified then the practice will spread even among those not ambiguously created by nature. Now the law permits men to marry men and women to marry women. Worst still incest, marriage between brother and sister is no longer condemned. And soon father and daughter, mother and son will pair off.

45. Individual freedom knows no limit. In the name of individual freedom anything can be done, even if it hurts the community. Liberal democracy is sacrosanct and may not be tampered with even when it is obviously destroying society and more. And all the while new freedoms are invented and old values derided.

46. Asian values are old and orthodox. The old, the parents, the teachers, they are respected. The community comes before the individual. The family is extended and is responsible for its members, not the Government. These are but some of the values which we accept and practise. They have not destroyed our society. Indeed they have helped us to maintain a balance in the contest between evil and good, in a world that is getting ever more confused. We should hang on to them despite the sneers of the liberals and the modern.

47. I think I owe it to you to explain why I believe in the East Asian future that I have advocated above.

48. What I am suggesting for East Asia is what has already worked for ASEAN.

49. After a quarter century, the ASEAN Community is now a haven of peace, of stability and of prosperity.

50. History can never be made to repeat itself. But it can be a great teacher and the source of great inspirations.

51. I ask you now: why not an East Asian zone of peace, of stability, of prosperity? If we achieve it, we may change the course of history; directly, the future of more than a quarter of mankind in the East, indirectly, the destiny of mankind.

52. An Asian Renaissance will not come in my lifetime. I pray that it will come in yours.