

Opening Remarks by

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President,

Malaysian International Affairs Forum at

DSA '88 Conference on

"Southeast Asia and Pacific Asia Security
in the Final Decade of the Twentieth Century",
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Yang Berhormat Dato' Abang Datu Abu Bakar Haji Mustapha, the
Honorable Deputy Minister of Defence of Malaysia, Yang
Berbahagia Tan Sri Datuk Hamzah Sendut, Chairman, Malaysian
Exhibition Services Sdn Bhd, Yang Berbahagia, Dato' Haji Amir
Haji Yaakub, Deputy Secretary General, Ministry of Defence,
Malaysia, Tan Sris and Dato's, Honorable Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Malaysian International Affairs Forum and
the organisers of "Defence Services Asia 1988", I extend a
very warm welcome to you to this conference on "Southeast
Asia and Pacific Asia Security in the Final Decade of the
Twentieth Century". As many of you know, the Western Pacific
countries of East Asia, Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia
have undergone tremendous change over the last several
decades, some of these countries recording very spectacular
economic growth rates. At the same time the dynamics of these

changes have been rapid and in some instances tumultuous, the linkages between the respective national actors and sub-region have also become an important element of this change, what some observers call under the general rubric of "interdependence", along the dimensions of economics, politics and security.

While it has been noted and predicted that the next century will be the "Pacific Century", meaning the world's center of gravity in international affairs will shift to this part of the world from the Atlantic, it is less certain that the transformation will be as pacific as the name implies. In particular, it is by no means certain that the changing configuration of power interests and the contest for influence will be easily discerned, and its denouements ascertained. It may well be asked whether the resort to the force of arms is or is no longer tenable in the sphere of political and economic relations when it has been demonstrated that global superiority and the capability to play a role can rest alone or in large part on the edge in economic competition and the generation of trade surpluses.

It is dangerous of course to propose generalizations when the region itself is assymetrical in terms of power, wealth and influence and the challenges each nation of the Asia Pacific faces is as myriad as the composition of their cultures and

societies, not to mention that their developmental performance has been neither uniform nor unidimensional. Nevertheless, we do know that a shift of a high order of magnitude is occurring, that the "balance of power" we have been accustomed to since the end of the Second World War is no longer a tenable proposition in this part of the world. It is on this premise that this conference has been designed, through which we seek a colloquium of minds to test our understanding and to enhance our analysis of the shifting equilibrium in the political, economic and security arenas of Pacific Asia in the last or final decade of this century of our time, the twentieth century.

Lest it be misunderstood, the term "Pacific Asia" has been used here deliberately so as to emphasise the term "Pacific" (meaning those countries of the Pacific Rim extending to Australasia) rather than "Asia-Pacific" which is more inclusive. The chosen nomenclature is of course only for a more defined focus, not to preclude our discussion of a vast and diverse region.

For the Malaysian International Affairs Forum, this undertaking is a modest one since we are a small organization, but the conference itself is a mammoth project that has not been without its difficulties in implementation. We thank you for bearing with us in this effort, and I personally thank everyone for the assistance rendered and

apologise for any shortcomings. I wish you a stimulating and rewarding conference.