

DOCUMENTATION

Address by Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone in Kuala Lumpur, 9 May 1983

Your Excellency Prime Minister Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad,
Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great honour for me to have been given this opportunity to state my views on the relations between Japan and the ASEAN countries here today in the presence of the distinguished Malaysian leader Prime Minister Dr Mahathir.

Mr Prime Minister, you made a profound impression on the Japanese people as an Asian statesman of outstanding vision and strong leadership when you visited Japan at the beginning of this year. The tireless efforts of the Malaysian people and the devoted activities of Malaysia's leaders have enabled Malaysia to achieve its brilliant development as witnessed today.

I would like first to pay my sincere respects to the Malaysian people and to their leaders as represented by Prime Minister Dr Mahathir.

Prime Minister Dr Mahathir, Distinguished Guests, the world is today in the throes of bringing forth a new era in the twenty-first century. The World Order formed after World War II is showing signs of change, and the international community is earnestly in search of ways to cope with this new situation. Economic recession and political confusion can be seen in various parts of the world, and large numbers of people are suffering in the struggle with their plight. Despite this general state of affairs, the ASEAN countries have managed to achieve consistently dynamic development. Overcoming differences among themselves and securing peace and stability in the region through solidarity, they have created a unique and harmonious regional community, the Association of South East Asian Nations. This is an illustrious achievement of which the ASEAN people can be proud before their ancestors and grandchildren. Indeed, this trail blazed by the ASEAN countries stands as a beacon of hope and model not only for the developing countries but many other countries as well.

What has been the magic behind this remarkable success? This is a question which people everywhere have been asking. In answer, I would say that one of the keys is to be found in the spiritual and cultural heritage common to this East Asian region where Japan and the ASEAN countries are located. This heritage is, for example, embodied in our life-style of valuing harmony over differences, co-operation over confrontation, humility over assertion. This East Asian heritage is extremely important to our modern society with its tendency toward division and conflict, and its importance cannot be over-emphasized.

Indeed, it was with profound wisdom that Prime Minister Dr Mahathir has, in his "Look East" policy, stressed the importance of learning not only from Western experience but also from our Asian heritage. He has rightly pointed out the importance of opening our eyes to the potential within us and developing our capabilities. As an Asian myself, I have been deeply moved by Prime Minister Dr Mahathir's words.

There has recently been a conspicuous reawakening to these Asian values among the Japanese people as well, and I see this as one of the major causes of the heightening of feelings of kinship between the Japanese and the ASEAN peoples.

Distinguished Guests, Japan has long held the maintenance of close and friendly relations with the ASEAN countries as a major pillar of our foreign policy. Immediately after becoming Prime Minister, I conveyed to the ASEAN leaders the importance which I place on Japan's relations with the ASEAN countries, and indicated that I hoped to visit the ASEAN countries. This was not only to maintain continuity with this basic Japanese foreign policy but was also because I hope to further strengthen the Japan-ASEAN relationship and to put it in a new dimension. The global situation today is very unsettled, and we cannot afford to rest easy merely pursuing standing policies.

The recession we are experiencing today is far longer and worse than any of us expected. It has been a major blow to the economies of the industrialized countries, and at the same time it has also severely disrupted the developing countries' economies, as seen in mounting debt obligations and stagnating commodity markets, and has thus thrown the world economy into a critical situation. Much to our regret, the free trade system itself is threatened by the rising of protectionism in some industrialized countries. The free trade system has been an all-important factor in making the dramatic post-war development of the world economy possible. It must, therefore, be defended at all costs.

While strongly appealing to the international community for the maintenance of the free trade system, I have advocated the idea of "Japan open to the world" and have accordingly taken a series of market-opening measures at home. Japan will continue to take full heed of the wishes of the ASEAN countries and other friends and to endeavour to further open its market. Specifically, we intend to increase the total ceiling quotas on GSP industrial products by about fifty per cent. I firmly believe that there can be no prosperity for Japan without prosperity for the ASEAN countries.

The leaders of the ASEAN countries have expressed the hope that the industrialized countries will deal seriously with the problems troubling the developing countries in the spirit of co-operation and solidarity. I intend to keep these wishes fully in mind when I attend the economic summit meeting scheduled to be held in Williamsburg at the end of this month.

Another crucial problem, along with the global recession, is that breaches of the peace through the use of force are still seen in various parts of the world. In Southeast Asia, Vietnam still refuses to withdraw its forces

from Cambodia and is thereby inflicting terrible suffering upon vast numbers of people. This has also been a yoke on the economic development of Vietnam itself and the other Indochinese countries. The economic outlook for these countries is still extremely bleak eight long years after the end of the war in Indochina.

I strongly urge the leaders of Vietnam to face up to this reality, decide to withdraw their forces from Cambodian territory, and embark upon the road to prosperity at peace with the ASEAN countries. I would like to reiterate here that Japan continues to support the efforts of the ASEAN countries for a peaceful solution to the Cambodian problem and that we are prepared to render all possible co-operation for reconstruction in Indochina once true peace has been restored in Cambodia.

Distinguished Guests, while I am on the subject of peace, allow me to touch briefly on how Japan intends to ensure its own peace and survival.

It is the basic policy of Japan to seek to preserve its security by active diplomatic efforts and by maintaining security by arrangements with the United States together with the minimum necessary self-defence capability — all in conformity with our constitution founded in the spirit of peace and international harmony.

In improving its self-defence capability, Japan is determined to commit itself solely and exclusively to self-defence and not to become a military power threatening neighbouring countries, as has been repeatedly declared by the Japanese Government on numerous occasions. I, too, shall make every effort to faithfully adhere to this basic defence policy which has been consistently upheld throughout Japan's postwar history. This is more than a matter of policy: it is deeply rooted in strong and unchanging Japanese national sentiments deriving from our sincere contrition for the past.

In the course of my present ASEAN visit, I have obtained the full understanding of the leaders of the ASEAN countries for this Japanese thinking on security.

It would, of course, be desirable for the cause of world peace if all arms were controlled and reduced. This is indeed the earnest hope of all peoples around the world. I hope progress can be achieved in the arms control negotiations which the United States is conducting with the Soviet Union and the way paved for a summit meeting between the two countries.

Prime Minister Dr Mahathir, Ladies and Gentlemen, next, I would like to say a few words, looking ahead to the twenty-first century, about what we can do now to make the co-operative relationship between Japan and the ASEAN countries even more fruitful.

Providing economic co-operation for the developing countries' nation-building is, we believe, one of the responsibilities Japan must fulfill. This is why Japan has been expanding and improving its official development assistance (ODA) under its new medium-term target over the past several years despite its extremely tight fiscal situation. I hereby promise you that there will be no change in Japan's basic policy of regarding the ASEAN countries as the highest-priority area for our assistance efforts. Moreover, in promoting eco-

conomic co-operation, nor will there be any change in our basic policy of placing the priority on rural development and agriculture, energy, human resources development, and small and medium-scale enterprises.

From this basic policy perspective, I would like to devote fresh efforts to the following new aspects in pursuit of "wider and deeper exchanges" between Japan and the ASEAN countries.

First is the transfer of industrial technology. In promoting industrial development in the developing countries, it is necessary to promote the transfer and dissemination of production technology and managerial know-how from the industrialized countries. Of course, such transfers are primarily undertaken along with investment and trade by private enterprises. In other words, they are subject to independent decisions based on economic rationality by the private sector. Therefore, we must strengthen co-operative relations in technology transfer at the private level, making full use of the initiative and vitality of the private sector. It is most welcome that discussions on this are already under way between non-governmental organizations in Japan and their ASEAN counterparts.

At the same time, the Government of Japan intends to hold consultations with the ASEAN countries to create an environment conducive to technology transfer through various means, including the dispatch of experts and the acceptance of technical staff for training.

It is important in making our co-operation more effective that projects promoted with Japanese economic co-operation operate at maximum efficiency. With this in mind, we are prepared to respond to the requests of the ASEAN countries for "plant renovation co-operation" aimed at improving productivity and revitalizing existing industrial plants through technological transfer in such fields as the operation, maintenance, and management of these plants should they be suited to such governmental co-operation.

Second is co-operation in the field of science and technology. The promotion of science and technology is the way to open up unlimited possibilities for the future, and the ASEAN countries, aware of the importance of scientific and technological development, have begun discussions aimed at promoting co-operation within the region.

Japan already participates in a wide variety of international co-operation in science and technology, and we would like to share the fruits of scientific and technological advances with the ASEAN countries as much as possible. From this perspective, I feel it would be extremely useful to convene regular consultations between our countries for the promotion of Japan-ASEAN science and technology co-operation and to exchange opinions in such fields as agricultural science, engineering, medical science, basic sciences, and frontier technologies. I am most gratified with the agreement with which this idea was greeted when I presented it in my discussions with the ASEAN leaders. I would therefore like to propose the holding of a meeting of experts in science and technology and a ministerial conference to study this important matter at a higher level.

Third and most important are personal exchanges. In order to further

consolidate the friendly relations between Japan and the ASEAN countries, we must strengthen mutual understanding and promote personal relations of friendship and trust among our peoples.

Happily, there has been a most welcome expansion in personal contacts between the Japanese and the ASEAN peoples. There has also been a dramatic increase in the width and depth of Japanese interest in the ASEAN countries in recent years.

The Government of Japan has long stressed the importance of personal contacts with the ASEAN countries, and we have thus launched a wide variety of such programmes. In addition to these ongoing programmes, I would like over the next five years to invite a total of 3,750 young people in education and other fields, the very people who will shoulder the task of ASEAN's future nation-building, to Japan so that they can spend their vacations in Japan and have the opportunity to discuss the future of Japan and the ASEAN countries with their Japanese counterparts. From such close personal contacts, I am confident that we can build Japan-ASEAN relations for future generations and sow the seeds of a long-lasting relationship of shared peace and prosperity based upon mutual understanding and true friendship. Likewise, if it is agreeable to the ASEAN countries, I would also like to send Japanese youths to your countries for similar opportunities and experiences. When these young people, with numerous friends throughout the region, grow up strong and confident and take their rightful places at the centres of our societies, the co-operative relations between Japan and the ASEAN countries shall be truly consolidated and become a driving force for the creation of a new Asian culture which shows the world the way to the future.

Such exchanges of young people who will shape our future, which I would call the "friendship programme for the twenty-first century", will also be a step toward realizing my long-cherished dream: Asia in the forefront of the future.

Prime Minister Dr Mahathir, Distinguished Guests, in my visit to the five ASEAN countries and my talks with the various national leaders, I have tried to be as candid and clear as possible about my own views. The ASEAN leaders have responded to me in kind. I particularly found it most profitable to be able to hear the profoundly insightful and knowledgeable views of Prime Minister Dr Mahathir who has honoured me by his presence here today. The ASEAN region is blessed with statesmen of long political experience and penetrating intellect, and I was impressed anew on this journey with how reassuring it is to have such wise leaders in the countries neighbouring Japan.

One of my purposes in making this tour of the ASEAN countries was to build personal relations based upon understanding and friendship with these outstanding leaders so that, should a problem arise, it will be possible for us to pick up the telephone and discuss the issue without reserve on either side. I am pleased that this hope has been realized.

Distinguished Guests, I am today near the end of my ASEAN journey. Wrapped up in the beautiful scenery and the stimulating conversation with

good friends which I enjoyed in every country, I hardly noticed the time pass until, now, it is already time to say farewell. I shall never forget the warm hospitality which you have shown me. I gratefully accept this cordiality as a token of the ASEAN peoples' friendship toward the Japanese people, and I promise that I shall take this message of friendship home with me when I leave Kuala Lumpur tomorrow.

SOURCE: Embassy of Japan, Singapore.