



# **Democracy, Human Rights, EAEC and Asian Values**

Selected Speeches by  
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# *The International Conference On “The Future Of Asia”*

*Tokyo, Japan, 19 May 1995*

I think I am qualified to speak on the future of my country, Malaysia. I am not so sure I can foresee the future of Asia.

However, having been invited to do so, I will try.

There was a time, not so very long ago, when all that Asian countries wanted was to Westernise. By this they did not mean industrialisation or achieving high per capita income. They meant simply having a Europeanised society, coats and ties and hats for women. Self-esteem was at its lowest ebb among Asians and Asian nations then. They looked down upon themselves as unworthy of preserving.

There were, of course, very good reasons for this inferiority complex. Large chunks of Asia were colonised by the Europeans, a few of whom were sufficient to rule millions. The Europeans had the skills, the knowledge and the manufacturing technology. Asians only had cottage crafts. The Europeans were militarily powerful, better organised and could impose their will.

Asians believed completely that the Europeans were super-beings whose way of life could be copied but whose achievements could never be equalled.

When Japan took on the Europeans in the Pacific War, most Asians thought that Japan was being foolhardy. Japan's defeat was expected. And, of course, after that defeat Japan was not expected to recover. Asians would continue to be subservient to the Europeans.

And as for the Europeans, they too were of the same mind. They were superior and they would always remain superior. They were so confident that no Asian nation would be able to catch up with them that they could afford to be charitable. And so Japan was allowed access to their huge markets, unrestricted.

Too late they realised that their charity was misplaced. Not only did Japan recover but such backward countries as South Korea and Taiwan also seemed capable of emulating Japan's economic miracle.

Historically, Europeans have had very unpleasant experiences of Asians. The Mongols, the Ottoman Turks and the Arabs had not only conquered or raided Europe but had ravaged European lands, burning, killing and capturing their people for slaves. For centuries they lived in fear of periodical raids by the Huns i.e. the Mongol Khans and the Turks. The Yellow Peril was very real to them. Although they may not talk about it so much now, the fear of the Yellow Peril is still very much there.

The recovery of Asian countries and their capacity, in many cases, to oust the Europeans from the market places of the world, cannot but awaken old fears of the Yellow Peril. Asians may not like it but European antagonism towards Asian economic expansion is going to figure a lot in the future of Asia.

For the moment Asia is not progressing uniformly. Much of the progress is taking place in East Asia i.e. North East Asia and South East Asia. But already it is becoming clear that Asian countries are quick to learn from the experience of other Asian countries. They may not feel up to emulating Western countries but they seem to believe that what one Asian country can do, other Asian countries can also do.

Beginning with South Korea and Taiwan's bid to replicate Japan, the process has spread to the countries of South East Asia. The effect of South East Asian countries succeeding in industrialising is even more profound. If largely brown South East Asians can do it, then everybody should be able to do it. Development and progress is no longer a mystery. And so China, the Indo-Chinese countries, Burma, the South Asian countries, have all begun the process of industrial development. Even the newly-independent Central Asian Republics have shown interest and are avidly following the progress of East Asia, to find out how backward countries can rehabilitate themselves and develop.

In the meantime, the East Asians are making so much progress that trade between them now makes up 40 percent of their total trade. Clearly they are still at the beginning. The potential is tremendous.

Presently China's GDP in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) terms is \$2,855 billion while the per capita GNP is \$435. By comparison Malaysia's GNP per capita is \$3,500. Surely the Chinese are capable of catching up with Malaysia. When it does, China's GDP should be around \$23,000 billion. The U.S. GDP is presently \$6,387 billion. Even if the U.S. moves ahead at three percent annual growth, it will not stay ahead of China for long.

In fact the World Bank calculated that by the year 2020 China will be the world's largest economy, fully 40 percent bigger than the second biggest economy, the United States of America. The same analysis concluded that assuming a surprise-free scenario, in PPP terms, six of the ten biggest economies in the world by the year 2020 will be in Asia. Other than China, Japan will be number three, India number four, fifth Indonesia, seventh South Korea, Thailand will be the eighth while Taiwan will be the tenth.

Of course such predictions cannot be accurate. There will be so many variables which will change the picture radically. But unless there is a major war either between the Asian nations themselves or between Asia and non-Asian nations, the chances are good that these countries are going to make it big.



The factor that contributed most to this hyperbolic scenario is the demise of the Communist and Socialist economic theories. The assumption that equality must mean justice sounds logical and ideal. Indeed in many instances equality does result in justice, as for example, equality before the law. But equality of wealth between members of society does not result in justice or even fairness. It actually results in everyone becoming poor and it impoverishes the whole nation. It took the Russians 70 years to learn this simple fact.

Once Communism and Socialism were rejected, private enterprise became possible. Admittedly many former Communists still feel private profits are sinful. But they will no doubt learn and over time they will accept profit motive as not only normal but actually helps to create and spread wealth.

Politically the change will be more guarded. The Communists will probably take a much longer time to discard authoritarian rule in favour of democracy. This in itself is not bad. Nothing is more unsettling than people held in bondage for decades to suddenly become completely free. Freedom goes to the head easily and quickly, and before anyone realises it, anarchy sets in.

The rapid adoption of democracy in a number of former Communist countries has only increased crime and corruption. Governments have become weak and less durable. Unfamiliar with the rule of law, they find themselves unable to enforce it the way liberals are supposed to enforce the law.

They are hardly to be blamed. Even the old democracies are not quite capable of handling democracy. The rights of the citizen are so honoured that they can form armed militia with the express intention of over-throwing the Government by violence. Since all they have done is to wear uniforms and carry arms, including machine guns, in countries where there is no dress code and everyone has a right to carry arms, they cannot be considered as breaching the law. They have to actually use their arms against the object of their hate before any action can be taken against them. Even then the punishment is likely to be mild. A life for a life is considered as barbaric. For killing

children and other innocent people they will be given a life sentence and then pardoned for good behaviour after serving 10 years.

Democracies are only beginning to learn that too much freedom is dangerous. But they are not yet ready to do anything about it.

Life has become unsafe in many democracies. And wealth has not always brought happiness. Even the massive welfare handouts have not done much good. There are many abuses and there is corruption everywhere, in the Government and in the business sector. Morals have decayed.

Aware of this, is it any wonder that the former Communist countries in Asia are not convinced that democracy, at least the Western variety, is the best system? They are not yet willing to discard their authoritarian rule for democracy as much as they are ready to accept the market economy as a solution to their economic problems.

Still, increasing wealth through the free market economic system must result in the citizens of former Communist countries demanding more freedom. But although there will be more freedom there is little likelihood that Asian countries of the future will adopt the Western style of unlimited freedom.

Already those Asian countries which have adopted Western ideas about democracy wholesale are finding ruling their country rather difficult. Disruptive strikes and riots undermine the economy and make life difficult for the citizens. Abolition of religious instructions in Government schools, while allowing absolute freedom of beliefs, has resulted in a loss of direction and the emergence of numerous cults, some of which are violent. Asians are now seeing Buddhist cults which can be equally violent. A democratic Government is not supposed to interfere, unless and until, lives and property are lost.

Liberal democracy may be good for the religious deviationists and cultists. The innocent victims may not think so. They have a right to their lives too.

The right to strike is regarded as one of the fundamental rights of the workers in democracies. But what is the basic premise of a strike? It is nothing more than a trial of strength between employers and employees, a trial to see who can withstand the most amount of damage. It is like asking two men in a quarrel to fight each other until one gives up from the pain inflicted. Is this how a civilised world settles conflicts? If there is a dispute, then go to war.

One would have thought that conflicts in this modern age should be settled by negotiations, by arbitration or by courts of law. But Western democracy advocates tests of strength as a means to settle disputes. They actively urge this. They even try to subvert the workforce of newly-emerging countries in the name of workers' rights. They know full well that the liberal exercise of these rights will retard the development of these struggling countries. But that is not about to deter them from forcing these rights on the workers of these countries. Of course, they are aware that industrial unrest in these countries will only benefit the workers in the developed countries. Don't anyone dare to suggest that they may have ulterior motives! They merely want to protect workers of the world.

Asian countries must be forgiven if they still suspect ulterior motives. They are not convinced that the Western form of democracy is the ultimate and the best form of democracy. And so they have begun to define their own interpretation of democracy.

Freedom, yes, but responsibility also. If two centuries ago Americans insisted that there should be "no taxation without representation", Asians of today believe there should be no freedom without responsibility.

For Asians, the community, the majority comes first. The individual and the minority must have their rights but not at the unreasonable expense of the majority. The individuals and the minority must conform to the mores of society. A little deviation may be allowed but unrestrained exhibition of personal freedom which disturbs the peace or threatens to undermine society is not what Asians expect from democracy.

Democracy is a method of Government. It is good only if the result is good. Here I am reminded of a television report on the Israelis killing Palestinian refugees in Lebanon almost 10 years ago. The American guest commentator expressed his horror at such killings. But he ended up by saying that the U.S. must support Israel because it was the only democratic country in the region. Apparently you can kill in the name of democracy.

Malaysia must admit without any apology that its democracy is not of the Western variety. When a Muslim religious group began to deviate from the true teachings of Islam the leaders were detained. They had to defend their beliefs to people well-versed in Islam. They failed to convince the learned Muslim scholars of the basis of their teachings. Finally they were themselves convinced that they had deviated and were persuaded to return to the true faith.

The action to bring back these deviationists was taken fairly early. Had they been allowed to go on until they stage some form of violent attacks on the people, it would have been too late. Of course, now that they have been pacified, many felt that the action of the Government was undemocratic. But Malaysia believes it is democratic to anticipate violence and protect the people.

Whether the West admits it or not, David Koresh and the Jones cult were the products of the Western form of democracy. So also is the recent bombing in Oklahoma. The Michigan Militia Corp has as yet done no real harm. But you can bet that sooner or later they will be using those guns which they democratically own.

Oppression by democrats is no less painful than oppression by dictators. Both should be condemned. Asia cannot accept Western mores wholesale. Asia should instead pick and choose which aspects of democracy it wants. Uniformity should not be a feature of Asian democracy. Each country should be allowed to tailor its democracy to cater to the characteristics of its people and their needs. The people should decide through the basic democratic process what kind and what degree of democracy they want.

The same applies to human rights. Asian human rights need not be a fair copy of Western human rights. The individual and the minority must be allowed their freedom but such freedom must not deprive the majority of their rights.

So far some Asian countries have refused to bow to Western pressures on democracy and human rights. Some, of course, still equate modernisation with total Westernisation, total acceptance of all the norms and even the idiosyncracies of the West. But the likelihood is that Asian countries of the future will be democratic but different, not only in relation to the West but even in relation to each other. Hopefully, they will learn to tolerate the differences and not feel guilty about not being uniformly democratic.

Apart from being more democratic and subscribing to their own perceptions as to what constitutes human rights - apart from accepting the free market economy - there can be no certainty about the future of Asia. Several scenarios are possible. Based upon Asian history and the present state of Asian countries, all these scenarios are possible.

First, taking the worst possible scenario, Asian countries would go to war against each other. It may start with disputes over the Spratlys. China insists that the South China Sea belongs to China along with all the islands, reefs and the minerals in the sea. To emphasise its claims, China builds a series of shelters for Chinese fishermen. They look suspiciously like military installations.

The ASEAN countries which by then include the Indo-Chinese state become agitated. Unable to take on a China that has become the most powerful economy in the world, ASEAN looks to Japan. Japan maintains a strictly neutral stand. The Chinese market is too valuable.

The United States offers to help and is welcomed by the ASEAN states. The Pacific Fleet begins to patrol the South China Sea. Clashes occur between the Chinese Navy and the United States Navy. The United Nations says it is in no position to intervene but appeals for the countries to settle their dispute through negotiation. All ignore the United Nations.

China declares war on the United States and a full scale war breaks out. A nuclear bomb is dropped on Beijing, a clean bomb which kills only about 10 million people. China retaliates by firing nuclear missiles at the west coast of America. By accident, one warhead falls near Tokyo.

I will leave the rest to your imagination. This is one scenario of the future of Asia.

Another scenario is where all the Asian countries accept the status quo. They may grow but must never overtake the West. Asian countries may not talk to each other on any issue or act in concert on anything. They are all members of the United States-led APEC.

World trade will be managed by the European Union (EU) and NAFTA, which by then would have come together to form the world's biggest trading bloc. This is presently being urged by a senior member of the EU and it is not unthinkable that this would happen. With their trading clout, the EU-NAFTA confederation could dictate terms to the rest of the world.

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) would be placed under the EU-NAFTA and through the WTO, world trade will be managed so that all the countries of the world would get what is determined as their fair share of the trade. China would still be big but not as big as the United States. China's trade with the EU-NAFTA will be fully regulated.

All markets will be opened to everybody. The small banks in developing economies like Malaysia, for example, will have the right to set up branches in the villages of Euromerica. Reciprocally, American banks can set up branches in Malaysian villages. Mergers take place daily and eventually there will be only a few mega banks controlled by the developed economies.

Some Asian countries revert to producing commodities while others prosper on the tourist trade, catering for travellers from rich countries. Manufacturing is best done by those countries with the technology, the capital, the marketing network and the know-how.

There will be no risk of war as countries will not be allowed to arm beyond what is required to keep the arms trade profitable. There will be occasional massacres as in Rwanda. A few hundred thousand people will be killed. As this is not war, the United Nations will not do anything beyond regretting. So much for the second scenario.

Can there be a third scenario in the future of Asia? Yes there can be and, indeed, the third scenario is the most likely scenario.

In this scenario, the countries of Asia all adopt the free market system while developing their own versions of democracy. There will be no hurry about political reforms. They see the chaos and the violence in the Western democracies and they attribute this to democratic extremism. Too much of a good thing is bad, even if the thing is called democracy. They therefore prefer to be cautious, democratising only slowly and rejecting certain disruptive practices of Western democracy. As a result, the Asian countries remain largely stable and are able to develop at a fast pace.

With the universal adoption of the free market system, there will be a huge crossflow of capital and know-how. The economies expand at high rates, far higher than those of Western countries.

The less developed Asian countries will be helped out through investments and know-how by other developed Asian countries. As other Asian countries prosper they invest in each other's country, and indeed in Africa, Europe and the Americas, generally boosting the world's economy.

The Asian countries become so rich that the rest of the world depend on the Asian market. Asia becomes the locomotive of growth for the rest of the world.

The initial attempt to obstruct the economic growth of Asian states is overcome through the Asian countries consenting to talk to each other and to act against managed trade as proposed by some non-Asian countries. Seeing the possibility of losing the rich Asian market if they persist, the non-Asian countries

stop obstructing. Agreement is reached through the WTO that world trade should be free and there should be no social clauses attached to it. In any case it was becoming clear that prosperity had led to better pay and working conditions for Asian workers, more democracy and greater respect for human rights.

Under these conditions, the Asian countries grow even faster. But the rest of the world benefits too as Asians begin to buy more from them, invest in these countries, introduce better work ethics and, of course, boost the tourist industry through their high spending travels.

All trade blocs are dissolved. The only trade bloc is the WTO. Of course, conditions are not always ideal. But differences are settled through the WTO, through third parties or through negotiations. This is the third scenario.

What our future will be can be largely determined by us. I am no more able to predict it than the next man. Even renowned futurists have been found to be well off the mark. 1984 has come and gone and we have not seen state control and Big Brother as described by George Orwell. But instead we see a lot of miracles which have not been predicted at all.

But if we want something we should work at it. The third scenario is idealistic but as I said, it is achievable. It will be a much more equitable world. Asians should not try to get rich at the expense of the rest of the world. Asians should be ready to share their wealth. In sharing, they will not lose. Indeed, they will enrich themselves.

In the late 1960's, Japan began to invest in Malaysia despite conditions for investment not being favourable.

Today Malaysia is one of the more prosperous developing countries. It is the 17th biggest importer in the world. And a lot of what it imports comes from Japan. The wealth that the Japanese created in Malaysia through their investments now returns to Japan. In addition, Malaysia is a good debtor, paying back cheap Yen loans with costly Yens.



Clearly enriching your trading partners enriches you. Asians should always remember this. It does not hurt to buy even the things you do not want from your trading partners in order to reduce the trade imbalance, to enrich them. It costs much more to defend yourself in subtle trade wars such as effective and continuous revaluation of your currency.

Asian countries, as they become rich, should not be greedy. They should not form trade blocs. They should not keep their wealth within their countries only. They should invest abroad and open their markets to fair competition.

If they do all these, then the future for Asia will be very bright indeed. And the future of the world will be bright too.

We can have any scenario we want. The future can be determined by us, if we want to. If we don't, then someone will determine it for us. We can't blame them if that future favours them. It is all up to us.

# *The Senate House Cambridge University,*

*(Asian versus Western values)*

*England, 15 March 1995*

Because I am a Malay and an Asian, because the Asian values debate has so often been over-simplified and misunderstood, because there is a need for greater mutual understanding and regard among the peoples of this world and because I am speaking before an important audience in the West, I have chosen to speak on Asian values. Let me however argue for mutual respect. Let me urge mutual enrichment.

Let me begin by offending the many Western universalists who insist that there are only universal values, that there is no such thing as 'Asian values', that Asia is too diverse to have common values and that proponents of 'Asian values' are doing nothing more than justifying authoritarianism, dictatorship and uncivilised behaviour.

There are many, of course, who believe that the world has seen such a convergence of cultures and values that there is no longer any value in talking about 'Western values', 'Eastern values' and so on. What I have found striking in recent years — especially after the end of the Cold War and the so-called 'end of history' — is the aggressiveness of this line of thinking and the intolerance for those who beg to differ.

The demise of communism and the discrediting of Fabian socialism have not impressed the Western universalists on the need to be a little circumspect, on the need to be less insistent that the West is always right. They still insist that what is right for them is right for the world.

There is no denying that over the last few hundred years, especially over the last half century, there has developed enormous areas in which the degree of common values and attitudes is remarkable and stunning — and historically unprecedented. Yet it seems equally clear that there are great areas of difference. There are major areas of potential friction. And there are some areas of serious political discord.

You will be surprised the number of times I have been reminded by the French people that when I speak of 'the West', I should not confuse 'the West' or identify it with the Anglo-Saxon world or the Anglo-Saxon way. Italians have told me the same. Swedes have told me this. Even I have often told myself this.

I often wonder, therefore, why there is such ferocious emotional denial of cultural pluralism and such intense intellectual denial of the obvious — although I have my suspicions.

Asia is of course a much bigger continent than Europe. The diversity of its civilisations is much greater and older. For every generalisation however, some exceptions can be found. And yet, there is a body of common values and beliefs that most of us in Asia hold on to, in order to guide our way in the world.

With regard to East Asia, David Hitchcock, the former Director for East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the United States Information Agency, has actually conducted the first ever quantitative survey comparing East Asian and American values.

Last year he asked Americans and East Asians (Japanese, Thais, Chinese, Koreans, Malaysians, Singaporeans, Indonesians and Filipinos) to choose six 'societal values' and five 'personal values' which they regarded as core and critical. The results were published a few months ago in a publication called *Asian Values and the United States: How Much Conflict?*

The survey found that the six societal values most valued by the East Asians were: first, having an orderly society; second, societal harmony; third, ensuring the accountability of public officials; fourth, being open to new ideas; fifth, freedom of expression; and sixth, respect for authority. On the other hand, the six most important for the Americans polled were: freedom of expression, personal freedom, the rights of the individual, open debate, thinking for oneself and sixth, the accountability of public officials. Interestingly slightly more East Asians emphasised the importance of 'new ideas' and public accountability than did Americans.

Despite Hitchcock's interest in discovering commonalities between East Asians and Americans, he found fundamental differences also with regard to personal values.

The five most important personal values stressed by the Americans polled were: self-reliance, personal achievement, hard work, achieving success in life, and fifth, helping others. Whereas the sixth most important core value stressed by the East Asians - 'fulfilling obligations to others' - was stressed by 39 percent of the East Asians, only 19 percent of the Americans polled emphasised this. Whereas 59 percent of the Americans stressed 'achieving success in life', half as many East Asians did so. Whereas 59 percent of the Americans stressed 'personal achievement', only 33 percent of the East Asians did so. On the other hand, whereas 69 percent of the East Asians emphasised respect for learning, only 15 percent of the Americans did. Whereas 48 percent of the East Asians stressed self-discipline, only 22 percent of the Americans did.

I do not know how accurately this American study reflects reality. But Hitchcock gives figures to support the intuitive assumptions of most East Asians and those who really know East Asia.

I do know that these values are sometimes more honoured in their breach than in their practice. I do know that many of these 'Asian values' were once also 'Western values'. Some are a function of our stage of development and will be challenged and discarded as we move forward.

I hope that my exposition on Asian values so far has not by any stretch of the imagination justified dictatorship, authoritarianism, anti-democratic practices, the suppression of human rights, the denial of democracy. I hope that my arguments also do not in any way justify torture, the exploitation of child labour, the suppression of women and the wanton destruction of the environment.

Having offended the universalists, the most militant of whom are congregated in the West, let me now be permitted to offend the authoritarians, so many of whom are said to congregate in 'the East'.

The first thing that might usefully be said is that atrocity anywhere must not be tolerated. It should be punished. No one should be allowed to hide behind the cloak of cultural relativism.

Secondly, many Asian values should obviously be destroyed.

In many parts of Asia, there is excessive materialism and in many parts, there is excessive anti-materialism; there is extremist spiritualism, or what passes for spiritualism.

In some societies, there is the ethic of fatalism. In others, the dominance of contentment, smugness, even arrogance. Feudalism is still very much alive so that in some Asian democracies and even Communist states, leadership is inherited and confined to neo-royal families, or the new aristocracy. In far too many Asian countries, there is excessive deference to authority. There is social and psychological authoritarianism.

The record of Asia with regard to fundamental economic, social and cultural rights has too often been as bad as the Asian record on fundamental civil and political rights.

Inequality, the repression of women and the weak. The economic, political, intellectual and social disempowerment of millions. A deep psychological sense of inferiority. The lack of self-confidence and the sense of self worth. Uncaring societies that have not an iota of love and regard for God's living creatures, for the infirm, the disadvantaged, the handicapped, the physical environment which man holds only in trust.

Undiluted adherence to tradition, superstition and magic. Deep and widespread corruption and tolerance of corruption — equally deep and widespread. The list is too long to even enumerate.

A third point is equally obvious. If 'Asian' does not mean 'good' exclusively, 'Western' does not mean 'bad' exclusively either. Asia's process of learning from the best in the West is far from complete. There are many Western values, found in the best Western societies, which we should adopt or internalise more deeply.

I remember in my country's own history, that we had to do a lot of persuading before we were granted the right to have elections and to vote. It was we, Malaysians, who were denied democracy and many of our human rights. But in the end the powers that be relented and retreated without scorching the earth while doing so. We took over our country largely intact. Our neighbours did not fare so well.

When Malaya became independent in 1957, our per capita income was lower than that of Haiti. Haiti did not take the path of democracy. We did. Haiti today is the poorest country in all of the Americas. We now have a standard of living higher than any major economy in the Americas, save only for the United States and Canada.

We could not have achieved what we have achieved without democracy. Let me reiterate this point because there are so many young Malaysians in the audience. Never forget. We could not have done it without democracy. This is why, for example, a resolute commitment to democracy is such a central pillar in Malaysia's 2020 Vision.

We could not have achieved what we have achieved without Malaysian democracy, which owes more to British democracy than American democracy. I suspect that given the excesses of some democratic practices, we would have become one of those countries where incessant street demonstrations, strikes and frequent violent changes of Government have resulted in near anarchy and economic regression. When people speak of

democracy, they assume that democracy must mean their country's special and particular brand of democratic institutions and practices. Other forms must be undemocratic or less democratic. Yet even among the champions, concepts and practices of democracy differ widely.

Obviously, it is often difficult to distinguish the democrat from the anti-democrat, the honest leader trying to do an honest day's work and the dishonest politician who has his own agenda. But there is a need to be fair to, and not to demonise, those in less than ideal circumstances who do not want gridlock democracy, weak and cowardly democracy and democratic practices and forms that over-emphasise the individual and neglect the community, that glorify combat, that foster unbridled conflict, that guarantee against harmony, consensus and cohesion, that threaten to destroy order and democracy itself, and that engender the prospect of total chaos.

Unfortunately, many who pass judgement do not have the time to even master the basics, still less the complicated picture. There are many who have passed judgement on me who believe that my name is 'Mohamad'. There are those who have passed judgement on Malaysia who do not even know how to pronounce the name of my country, and indeed where in the world it is.

I have said a few things on Asian values and on cultural pluralism. Let me now say a few words about mutual respect and mutual enrichment.

Before I insist that 'the West' must have more respect for other values and other cultures, let me concede that we outside 'the West' also need a balanced perspective on 'the West'. If it was ridiculous for so many of our elites to once believe that everything that was good was in the West and everything that was in the West was good, it is equally ridiculous to now believe that everything that is bad is in the West and everything that is in the West is bad.

Mutual regard is simply that. There is much in the West that commands respect.

At the same time, it is right and it is time that Asia too is accorded the regard and the respect that is its due.

Mutual respect demands an acceptance that those who have a different view are not necessarily misguided or evil. Mutual respect demands a minimum level of humility on all sides. The countries of the West have a right to their preferences. But they have no right to ram their preferences down anyone's throat.

In a recent speech at the "Europe/East Asia Summit" organised by the World Economic Forum, I half jokingly said that in their more exuberant moments, there are many Asian leaders who think they can solve the problem of Serbian atrocities in Bosnia, the Basque problem and the income inequalities between northern and southern Italy.

In many Western societies, there are massive problems of drug addiction. There are teachers afraid of their pupils. There is chronic vandalism. There are some societies where there are more illegitimate babies than legitimate ones. There are countries where large numbers in their thirties or even forties have never worked for a single day of their lives. There are places where an unemployed person is better off not working than if he found a job. There are some democracies where political leaders are afraid to do what they know is right, for one reason or another. And the people and their leaders live in fear, fear of the free media which they so loudly proclaim as inviolable. Indeed, they are quite literally oppressed by their own media, the way people in feudal societies are oppressed by their rulers, knowing their unfortunate situation but not daring to raise their voices against an established institution, to curb its excesses if not to revolt against it.

Many Asian leaders, in their moments of levity, I hasten to add, believe that they have the answers to such problems. If some European countries want their help and advice, I said, "I am sure they would be willing to give such help and advice." But so far, it has not entered the mind of any Asian leader to threaten sanctions if any European country fails to put its house in order. No Asian parliament I am aware of has passed a single resolution calling on its government to take steps should a European country not reform itself.



If any Asian leader were to so threaten, or if any Asian parliament were to so act, the West would regard them as mad. The West would regard the whole idea as preposterous.

If it is preposterous and mad for Asian leaders to threaten sanctions when Europeans fail to measure up to their standards and norms, could it not be a little preposterous for Europeans to threaten sanctions when non-evil and non-uncivilised Asian countries prefer their own standards and norms and not Europe's?

To this and many other questions I asked, I did not get a response. All I received was a public admonition. Although what I said about Europe might be true came the rebuttal, it was 'unacceptable', I repeat 'unacceptable'. It was not 'unwise', not 'injudicious', but 'unacceptable' that I should have publicly mentioned some of the ills found in Europe. A European press correspondent asked me afterwards whether I thought that the European participants at the Forum came to be lectured to by me. The free press which lectures all the time to the world obviously did not think I have a right to free speech.

The famous political scientist, Samuel Huntington, ended his equally famous essay, *The Clash of Civilisations*, with the call for the civilisations to co-exist. I call not for co-existence, but for mutual cultural enrichment.

We in Asia have learnt a great deal from the West. We will be unnecessarily constraining our full potential if this process were now to be stopped. At the same time, we have to learn a great deal from 'the East', from the rest of Asia, from Africa and Latin America - and from the best that our own histories and cultures have to offer.

I believe that Europe too may find some value in this message of enriching each other, of mutual enrichment, of rejuvenation and of self-discovery. Asian values are Asian values; European values are European values. The twain can meet and from the meeting, there might be some understanding and appreciation of the wisdom of each, and hopefully a wedding of the good and rejection of what is bad or evil, God willing. Let us all admit that no one has a monopoly of wisdom.

# *The Just International Conference On Rethinking Human Rights*

*(Human Rights)*

*Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

*6 December 1994*

If I may be permitted, I would like to go back in history a little. It is well-known that ever since men began to live in groups or communities, the concept of their rights and obligations to the community had always bothered the members. No sooner had they devised a set of values to protect the members of the community from each other, and from those empowered to enforce the rules of communal living, when they found that they were either unenforceable or that abuses could be perpetrated by the members and by the very people elevated to positions of authority.

And so concepts and rules were revised and revised again and again. And so in any community, the rules and values differed as between different periods of its development. While a society may consider hanging a man for the crime of stealing a sheep in one period as the natural and just thing to do, in another day and age it may consider that hanging to death as a punishment, even for blatant murder of a fellow man, as being too barbaric and inhuman.

As the world has numerous communities and the state of their development differs widely, it is natural to expect that their concepts of human rights, of justice, and of obligation to the community to differ, and differ widely.

Perhaps the focus on human rights as being universal crystallised during the Second World War. Prior to that, the Europeans who had nicely divided up the world into their empires where they were free to do what they liked with their colonial inhabitants, did not believe in the universality of human rights. The rights of the white man was to rule the non-whites, to civilise them, and to spread their particular religion. This was the White man's burden and it was glorified as a God-given task.

The non-white colonial people must accept white rule totally. If there were abuses of authority or position by the whites, the colonial people had to accept this as a part of the process of civilising them, of bringing order and a modicum of development to them. They may not question their colonial masters and certainly they may not strive to free themselves. For them, human rights practically did not exist. For the imperial nations of Europe, human rights were only for their own people. They were not universal and did not apply to colonial people.

But World War II saw the horrors of the German concentration camps where six million European Jews were killed after unbelievable cruelty was perpetrated against them. In the East, the Japanese ran prisoners-of-war camps for surrendered Europeans. Although they were never as systematic in meting out cruel treatments, they nevertheless cruelly misused their prisoners.

Shocked by these brutalities, the Allied powers decided that such cruelties must never happen again. They decided to spell out universal human rights which were to be enforced by a new organisation, the United Nations Organisation (UNO). Ignoring totally and unembarrassed by the horrors they brought to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they blithely enunciated their version of universal human rights.

The preamble to the United Nations Charter among other things, reads thus;

“We the peoples of the U.N., determined to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”.

Almost immediately the victorious allied founders of the U.N. ran into trouble with their universal human rights. They had thought that their victory would bring about a restoration of their empires in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. They thought they were to be the ones to enforce their codes among their native subjects. That this was their view was made clear by the great Winston Churchill who grandly declared that he was not elected to preside over the dissolution of the British Empire.

But in the event, the colonial territories struck back by demanding independence based on the very universality of human rights which was spelt out in the U.N. Charter. To cut a long story short, the erstwhile colonies gained independence one by one. Mostly the imperial powers gave up with little grace, frequently fighting against the granting of independence with the kind of cruelty which makes nonsense of their subscription to human rights principles.

But old imperialistic ways do not die. They merely metamorphose. Almost as soon as the colonies became independent, colonialism by other means was initiated.

Economic forces, the Western media and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) carried on where the colonial governments left off. The U.N. may talk of the “... equal rights... of nations, large and small,” but it became clear that large nations, or rather powerful nations, were more equal than small nations. Neo-colonialism perpetuated the old hegemony.

But the major Allied powers which created the U.N. and drafted its charter split up into East and West, i.e. the Soviet bloc and the Western bloc. Fearful of the possibility of the new states switching over to the Eastern bloc, the governments of the Western Allies were careful when applying pressure on the new nations.

Much later the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union collapsed leaving a unipolar world. All pretense at non-interference in the affairs of independent nations was dropped. A new international order was enunciated in which the powerful countries claim a right to impose their system of Government, their free market and their concept of human rights on every country.

All countries must convert to the multi-party system of government and practise the liberal views on human rights as conceived by the Europeans and the North Americans.

Most nations agree that the democratic form of government is better than the feudal or totalitarian systems. But even among the Western democracies, practices differ. Thus, while the multi-party system is advocated, many Western nations effectively allow only two parties to function in their own countries.

The multi-party system can result in no party being able to get a sufficient majority to form a government. Proportional representation by parties will have the same result. Even a two-party system can result in very weak majorities which put the government at the mercy of their more unscrupulous members and their threats to rebel or cross over and bring down the government.

Developed countries can do with weak governments or no government. But developing countries cannot function without strong authority on the part of government. Unstable and weak governments will result in chaos, and chaos cannot contribute to the development and well-being of developing countries. Divisive politics will occupy the time and minds of everyone, as we can witness in many a developing country today.

The developing countries, by and large, want to practise democracy but must they practise only the liberal forms prescribed by the West, forms which will retard their development and continued independence? But they are continuously being harassed through economic pressures including withdrawal of aid and loans, by carping criticisms and deliberate misinformation by the Western media and by

campaigns on the part of Western NGOs, who sometimes finance pressure groups within the country to obstruct the government which they label as undemocratic. Even if the government is replaced, the new government would still be harassed.

But that is not all. While the Western liberals would badger people to opt for democracy and where they thought fit to overthrow their 'undemocratic' government, they can expect no help if they get into trouble while attempting to democratise their country. Thus the Kurds of Iraq were urged to shake off the rule of Saddam Hussein and establish their own country. When, after the Western countries had forced the Iraqis out of Kuwait, the Kurds rebelled, they were given no help except for gleeful reports by the Western media regarding the problems posed by the Kurds against Saddam Hussein's government. The rebellion was mercilessly put down while the Western democrats merely looked on.

In Yugoslavia, the different states of the Federation were encouraged to democratically strive for independence. All the states had to face military opposition from the dominant Serbs. In Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Serbs mounted a savage attack and openly declared their intention to carry out ethnic cleansing, an euphemism for genocide. Hundreds of thousands of Croats and Bosnian Muslims and non-Muslims were killed, tens of thousands of women were raped and millions were rendered homeless and forced to migrate. But the Western liberals did practically nothing to ensure that democratic processes are respected by the Serbs.

The record of the democratic governments of the West is not very inspiring. Unless their own interests are at stake, as in Kuwait, they would not risk anything in the cause of democracy. Is it any wonder that many countries are leery of the liberal system propounded by the Western democrats?

If the record of the Western democrats in propagating their ideology is dismal, their own human rights records are worse. The West's interpretation of human rights is that every individual can do what he likes, free from any restraint by

governments. It does not matter if the government is elected democratically by the majority of the people. Governments, according to the liberal democrats, cannot in any way act against the personal wishes of the individual in society.

The result is perhaps not quite what the original liberal democrats expected. Individuals soon decided that they should break every rule and code governing their society. Beginning with simple things like dress codes, they went on to discard marriage as an institution. Extra-marital sex became the norm. The family was redefined to mean co-habitation between a man and a woman, with frequent changes of partners, or between a man and a man or woman and woman. Children were begotten without known fathers, which in time will lead to incest between brothers and sisters and even father and daughter or mother and son. But then incest to them is not wrong either, if that is what is desired by the individuals.

Hedonism and total immorality are the norms of absolute freedom for one and all. Yet women dressed and behaving provocatively object to being sexually harassed, while leaders are expected to have unblemished records on sex and drugs. Clearly the Western society is confused as to what it wants. It wants absolute freedom for everyone but no freedom when the individual or society objects. If individuals or society can object to sexual harassment or infidelity among their leaders then there cannot be absolute freedom. And yet the West insists that freedom must in no way be fettered and that everyone must accept Western norms. They see nothing contradictory in the contrary attitudes.

But it is with regard to freedom from oppression and brutality that Western hypocrisy is at its worst. Western governments, their media and their NGOs, are tireless in their condemnation of non-Western countries for their human rights records. They threaten sanctions, withdrawal of aid, stoppage of loans, economic and trade union boycotts and actual military strikes against those they accuse of violating human rights. They even kidnap people in other countries in order to try them in their courts under their laws if they see fit to do so. They have

no respect for independence or territorial integrity in their zeal to uphold their human rights principle.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the much vaunted victory over Iraq, the Western powers declared that the independence of nations notwithstanding, they have a right to interfere in the internal affairs of a country if there is evidence of human rights violation. This is very noble but the method is questionable. What qualifies the Western liberal democrats to become both judge and executor of the behaviour of nations and citizens of other countries? If there is to be interference in the internal affairs of nations, should not the U.N. be the right body to lay down the rules and to act? But the mild objections by insignificant nations were brushed aside. And so, among other things, people in distant lands who unknowingly breach the laws of powerful nations are tried in absentia and sentenced. The implication of this is frightening. When you can be tried under the laws of another country where you have no rights, you have lost your freedom and your independence. You have become colonised again.

And among the other things is Western hypocrisy in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Having arrogated to themselves the right to intervene anywhere where human rights are violated, surely the champions of human rights are not going to allow the Serbs to commit atrocities and genocide. Armed troops were sent complete with sophisticated weapons, tanks and jet fighters and bombers by the Western democratic champions of human rights. To do what? To stand and watch as Serbs butchered 200,000 Bosnian Muslims and Croats, raped tens of thousands of women, operated concentration camps no less hideous than the Nazis, and hounded millions from their homes and their land. And still the Serbs went on with their ethnic cleansing in full view of the soldiers and generals of the countries which had vowed to put an end to violation of human rights everywhere.

Every now and again the Serbs were threatened by these so-called defenders of human rights. They, the Serbs, would be bombed if they do not stop. After a brave display of the prowess of Western air superiority and sophisticated war planes, the



whole NATO forces withdrew and whimpered. The Serbs were again urged to negotiate. The Serbs shelled and rocketed the Bosnians. People, innocent people, even patients in hospitals, were killed and wounded. The champions of human rights, worried that their soldiers might be scratched, did nothing.

The Serbs have the weapons. The Bosnians have none. The champions of human rights believe this is an ideal situation. If the Bosnians are given weapons, then instead of the Bosnians alone being killed, the Serbs might be wounded also. So there would be more casualties. Besides, the Serbs will get angry with the U.N. for not keeping their Bosnian victims unarmed, and they might turn their guns on the NATO forces. This cannot be allowed to happen. The U.N. is there to keep the peace, not to enforce peace. If the Serbs do not stop fighting then there is no peace to keep. So there is nothing the NATO forces can do. The Serbs can go on with their butchering of the Bosnians, their conquest of territories. And now the Serbs are faced with the fiercest threat. If they do not stop attacking the Bosnians, NATO will withdraw its troops and let the Serbs conquer Bosnia. Not only are the Western liberals cowards, but their logic is twisted as well.

This then is the reality and irony of Western human rights. On the one hand other Governments are threatened because of some minor breach of human rights; on the other hand, when Western interest is not at stake they are prepared to allow the most brutal violation of human rights to take place before their very eyes.

It is rather difficult for us to agree and to accept these double standards. And this unwillingness to accede has brought on a tirade of accusations about Asian recalcitrance. It would seem that Asians have no right to define and practice their own sets of values about human rights. What, we are asked, are Asian values? The question is rhetorical because the implication is that Asians cannot possibly understand human rights, much less set up their own values.

This conference is about human rights. If, indeed, human rights have already been determined and remain only to be

accepted, then I do not think a conference is necessary. Obviously in holding your conference you believe that human rights need to be discussed, to be defined or redefined and to be propagated.

No one, no country, no people and no civilisation has a right to claim that it has a monopoly of wisdom as to what constitutes human rights. Certainly from the records and the performance of the Western liberals, they are least capable of defining and preaching human rights. Indeed, at the moment, they have no right at all to talk of human rights, much less judge others on this issue.

But admittedly, Asians are not the best examples of the protagonists of human rights, either. They have been guilty in the past and, perhaps, lately too. But not as pictured by the Western media.

I hope your conference will be able to examine human rights not as Asians or Europeans, but as members of the human race. It is timely, for faith in modern civilisation is fast diminishing. We can put a man on the moon. We can examine stars light-years away, we can achieve instant contact with every part of the world, we can build intelligent machines and many more wonders. But we are still quite uncivilised, for when it comes to killing each other we are worse than animals. The liberal views of the West on human rights and on other issues do not provide the answers to the woes of today's world. Everyone including "the bunch of Asians" must be allowed to make suggestions and contribute towards devising new sets of values which may help resolve some of the problems we face today. I hope you can contribute.

# *The Kyushu-Asian Summit For Local Authorities*

*(EAEC and Co-existence)  
Kyushu, Japan, 21 October 1994*

I have been asked to speak on the theme of "Co-existence in Asia". Admittedly, this is a wide-ranging topic, a comprehensive treatment of which would not be possible in one session like this.

Co-existence is imperative because the world is shrinking. We are all closer to each other. The magic of technology now enables us to see around the curve of the globe, to look at events in distant lands even as they happen. We are all neighbours and what happens to neighbours affects us all as much as what happens to us affects our neighbours.

The world is one and we are all the citizens of this planet. As citizens we should care for each other.

But the fact of the matter is that we are still divided, divided by geographical locations, by ethnic groups and by culture. There is still a Europe which is peopled by Europeans, there is still Africa peopled by the Africans and in Asia there are a number of ethno-cultural groups which differ from each other although they have certain common traits which set them apart from Europeans and Africans.

What I am trying to say is that Asians are not Europeans and Europeans cannot suddenly claim to be Asians. It is not a question of deciding to be Asian or European or African. It is not even a question of geographical location. It is cultural. It is culture which differentiates us. Unless and until we adopt the cultural values and practices of a group, any claim to belong to the group will have no meaning.

Now Japan is Asian, more particularly it is East Asian. Whether it likes it or not, it is geographically and culturally Asian. Even in a shrunken world, it cannot disclaim the facts. In any case the decision to disclaim does not lie with Japan alone. The other party or parties have to accede to the decision made to identify with them.

East Asia where Japan naturally belongs may not have a claim on Japan. But that does not detract from the fact that Japan belongs in East Asia, geographically and culturally.

But very soon Japan is going to belong to East Asia even economically, if it is not already so. East Asia today has the highest economic growth rate. It has, if you include South Asia, and you must include South Asia for South Asia is essentially of the East and is Asian; it has almost three billion people, more than the peoples of Europe, Africa and the Americas added together. And almost all the three billion people are hard working and trainable people, able to do and excel in almost any field of human endeavour.

The picture is rapidly changing. Where once most of Asia was Socialist or Communist, today the economic theories of the Socialists and the Communists, if not the political ideologies, have been abandoned. Most of Asia has become a huge free market.

No country can really be rich if the people are poor. It took the Russians 70 years to realise this. Their leaders saw how rich the capitalist countries were. Even workers owned luxuries such as cars, houses and electric household appliances.

Unfortunately, the Russian leaders assumed that all the wealth was the result of democracy and the free-market system. And so without any preparation, they switched from the

centrally-planned state-controlled economic system to the free-market. With no private capital, entrepreneurs and management know-how, they are now worse off than when they were under the Communist system. All they have is high inflation, high crime rates and general poverty.

To make matters worse, they adopted the multi-party democratic system, again without any preparation. This is a perfect recipe for anarchy. Democracy does not work unless there is a basic understanding among the people in general, not just the leaders, on the limits of democracy and the need to be responsible.

However the Socialist states in the East did not rush into adopting the free-market and the multi-party democratic system of Government. They introduced the free market gradually, limiting it to certain areas only as in China. They continue to have tight Government control. It may not be very democratic, but it is at least not anarchic. Rushing into democracy is meaningless if all you get is anarchy.

People need time to manage economic freedom and the responsibility needed in order to make it work. And when they do, they would demand and they should be given, political freedom in graduated doses. Democracy can then flower without anarchy.

Because the Socialist states in the East have not rushed into political reforms blindly, their adoption of the free-market system is more likely to succeed. And indeed, we see in China and Vietnam, the high economic growth that we do not see in the former Soviet republics and the Eastern European countries.

Fortunately also, the East already has the capital and the technology necessary for stimulating economic growth. Even without Western capital, foreign investments from countries like Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore and even the other South East Asian countries, are sufficient to make the liberalisation of the economy of the East Asian Socialist countries work. And the Far Eastern countries have the right amount of technology and entrepreneurial expertise to inject

into the economy of the former Socialist states. There is no doubt that the people in these countries are learning the intricacies of the free market system very fast.

Political stability and the careful adoption of the free market system, assisted by foreign investments and expertise, will result in the rapid development of East Asian countries. They will be joined by a less socialistic India and other South Asian countries whose people are skilled in trade and industry.

In a very short space of time, East Asia, South East Asia and South Asia will become one of the wealthiest regions in the world, if not the wealthiest. The per capita income may remain lower than that in Europe or in America, but the purchasing power of three billion people will be very considerable indeed. Without a doubt the region will become a huge market.

Intra-regional trade will bloom and will overtake the trade with other regions. Even now, the trade between East and South East Asian countries together makes up the biggest proportion of their world trade. This trade will increase in volume as India opens its doors. Investment flows between all these countries will also grow. East Asian multinationals will emerge from the rapidly developing countries, helping to enhance trade, investments and the transfer of technology.

Affluence will create greater demands for goods and services. Shipping and air travel for business and pleasure will grow rapidly. China, which only a decade ago had no outgoing tourists, now provides East Asia with more than a million tourists a year. Indians will soon be travelling in massive numbers.

In the midst of all these, lies Japan, the only developed Asian country. It is rich in capital, it has world-class technology and has almost unlimited entrepreneurial and management talents. Its strategy for recovery and prosperity was based on the import of raw materials, processing and adding value and then exporting the finished products. In this, it was helped by a generous United States, intent on weaning Japan away from its militarist past. Not only did the United States provide the initial

aid, but it also opened its huge market to unlimited quantities of Japanese goods. It was fully convinced that Japanese products would never pose a threat to American products, either in America or elsewhere, in the world's market.

The Japanese have every reason to be grateful to the United States. Not only were they aided and offered access to the richest market in the world, but they need not spend much on their own defence. The United States literally undertook to defend Japan against all-comers. Thus, expenditure on defence was reduced to the minimum.

Japan's recovery and reconstruction was rapid and complete. For several years, it grew by 12 percent per annum and became very rich. While it expected access to foreign markets, its own market remained closed, except for the raw materials it did not have. Countries like Malaysia were subjected to quotas and non-tariff barriers even for canned pineapples. Manufactured products were, and still are, almost entirely restricted except for those manufactured by Japanese-owned industries located overseas. Today the trade balance between Malaysia and Japan is very much in Japan's favour.

Yen credits at low interest rates were extended to developing countries like Malaysia. These were very welcome indeed. But then the yen appreciated in value against the Malaysian ringgit by 100 percent.

What this means is that in terms of Malaysian currency, we have to repay a 100 million Malaysian ringgit worth of yen loan with 200 million Malaysian ringgit plus the interest on this 200 million Malaysian ringgit. It was not a cheap loan at all. It was very expensive.

We tried to renegotiate the loan in order to reduce slightly our debt burden to Japan. We were not given even one yen reduction.

The endaka was not caused by us. But we the developing countries have to pay. Not only were our debts doubled, but the manufactured goods from Japan increased in price. We have to pay more for all our Japanese imports.

On the other hand, the appreciation of the yen against the US dollar means that in yen terms Japanese imports of raw materials, including oil, cost much less. The yen appreciation may make Japanese goods more costly and less competitive against the same products from other developed countries. The developed countries gained from this, but developing countries like Malaysia gained nothing. As the yen has now appreciated by another 50 percent our losses have increased. Malaysia has decided not to borrow any more yen.

Japan owes the United States a great debt of gratitude. I think Japan should always remember this and be loyal to the United States. But Japan also owes East Asia and South East Asia a great debt.

I do not want to rake up the past. The Japanese conquest and occupation of the countries of East and South East Asia and the atrocities committed then should be forgotten. We should think of the future.

That is why I told Speaker Doi and Prime Minister Murayama that I do not think Japan should continue to apologise for her past dark deeds. I do not see the German or Italian leaders making the rounds of European and African countries or Israel to apologise for what they did during the war. Not only do they not apologise, but they roundly criticise and condemn some of these countries for human rights violation, etc. They who had committed crimes against humanity now stand in judgement over their former victims. Why then should every Japanese Prime Minister go round to apologise?

That is why I say as much as Japan owes the United States, Japan owes the East and South East Asian countries more, not just for the past but for the present also. We do not need apologies. What we need is your cooperation and your help to develop us.

We called for the formation of the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) in order to enable us to discuss common issues and to help the least developed among us to reconstruct. The EAEC is not a trade bloc, not a free trade area or a customs



union. We have explained often enough that it is a forum, a talk shop, for discussions only. We are not going to mount a trade offensive against anyone. We merely want to have a fair say in world trade affairs. We do not want to be brushed aside as we are now, when we talk as individual countries about our problems in world fora.

We are merely asking that Japan join the EAEC; Japan, the only developed country in East Asia, the only developed country that is not European. We are disappointed when Japanese officials asked us to explain and explain all over again what the EAEC is all about. Even those officials who have served for years in South East Asia claim that they do not know about the EAEC.

We are saddened by this. The only Asian country with the ability to help fellow Asian countries refuses to do so, but instead demands to know why America is not included, why Australia and New Zealand are not included? The answer is obvious. They are not East Asian. We would like to be a member of the European Union, but we are not eligible. We would like to belong to NAFTA but we are not part of North America. Why are people who are not Asian and in East Asia supposed to have a right to be members of an East Asian Organisation?

Are we being racist? If we are then the Europeans with their European Union and the Americans with their NAFTA must be more racist. We want only one Trade Zone and that is the whole world. The EAEC will not trade only with itself. It will not give trade privileges to its members. It only wants a forum to discuss common problems, to solve them and to share development expertise together. Is it so wrong for the nations of East Asia to want to prosper? Is it so wrong for us to look up to Japan as a model and as a leader?

Japan is Asian. Japan is of East Asia. You cannot run from this geo-cultural fact. You belong here.

We are not asking you to aid us. We are asking you to be a leader in this region. We are asking you to join us and play a leading role. You have the stature and the means.

The EAEC is not the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere that you promoted during the Second World War — the Pacific War. It is not your invention. It is not your creation. It is the brainchild of South East Asia. We would not propose it if we think you are going to dominate us. We know that Japan has foresworn war and military adventures. We merely want you to be our partner, to be our equal but to be also the first among equals.

It is a small request. While you think of the help you have received from others, think also of us in East Asia, in South East Asia where you test the marketability of your products. As much as others have a claim, we in East Asia also have a claim on you. So please recognise that claim.

I did not ask Mr. Murayama not to apologise because I want something from Japan. In fact, when I dismiss the need to apologise I also told him that Malaysia does not want the Yen loan Japan was offering. I speak frankly and sincerely. Japan will not be forsaking America by joining the EAEC. America's fear of the EAEC is without basis. With Japan in EAEC, you can ensure that we will not make any anti-American decision or policies. You can play a pivotal role. If you really wish to make amends for your past, this is your chance. If you think that we should co-exist, then the EAEC is a step towards co-existence, towards mutual help, towards closer and more meaningful relations among East Asians.

# *The World Economic Forum Europe/East Asia Summit*

*(Europe and East Asia -  
Economic and Political links)  
Singapore, 13 October 1994*

I am delighted to be given the honour to speak about the future at this World Economic Forum; the future economic and political links between Europe and East Asia.

The focus on the future is certainly very appropriate. It is the most important time for all of us. Although we may celebrate or berate the past; although we may enjoy or struggle through the present; the future is really where all of us will be spending the rest of our lives.

Even today, there are some who say that Europe will inherit the future. Lester Thurow used to argue this very strongly. He may well be right. But he is more circumspect these days.

There is a growing number who glibly talk about the Age of the Pacific. And there are those who talk about the 21st century being the Century of Asia, as if in some way, various parts of the world will oblige the popular historian by agreeing to rise or fall, on each occasion, in neat chunks of a hundred years.

Thus it is said that the Nineteenth Century was the Century of Europe, the Twentieth Century is the Century of America and the Twenty-First century will be the Century of Asia.

The more objective truth with regard to the past surely is that for many more than one century, Europe dominated the world — in a way that was never done before. And in a way that can never be done again. For a relatively short time, the United States was the most important superpower. But its cumulative impact on the world was not of the order of the European onslaught.

As to who will inherit the future, I hope that no single nation, no single people and no single region will inherit the future.

I hope that a very large number of nations from every corner of the global compass - including Asia, Europe, Africa, the Americas and elsewhere - will inherit the future. I hope that all people of talent and diligence, who earn the right —including a very large number of Asians, Europeans, Africans, Americans and others — will inherit the future. I hope that the future will belong to all those who have the will and who are willing to put in the effort.

My hope is that the Twenty-First century will above all, be a century of cooperative global prosperity, democratic global governance without hegemony from any quarter, with greater global equality, fraternity and caring and much more mutual respect. The need to establish a much more prosperous, democratic, egalitarian, fraternal, caring world order built on mutual respect is the backdrop against which my more specific remarks on the Europe-East Asia relationship should be seen.

Quite obviously, to reach the new world order that I have envisioned, will require an economic revolution - because there are too many millions living in poverty and too many living in abject poverty. There has to be a political revolution because there is too little democracy, too little egalitarianism and too much hegemony in the community of nations. And there has to be a psychological and cultural revolution because too many believe in beggar-thy-neighbour policies when all our interest lies in enrich-thy-neighbour policies, in enriching others so that we can take advantage of their wealth and prosperity. There also has to be less arrogance and more mutual respect all around.

Equally obviously, the Europe-East Asia nexus is also very much in need of revolutionary change; for the most dynamic and drastic evolution at the greatest speed possible.

First, Western Europe should sell more to East Asia and vice versa. We need to strengthen and enrich our trade relations.

In 1990, the European Community (EC) accounted for close to 30 percent of total global output. If everything is equal, the European Community should account for 30 percent of East Asia's total imports. In fact, the European Community's share of East Asia's imports added up to only 12 percent of the regional economy's total imports.

This is not bad given that in 1985 the European Community's share was only 9 percent. In 1980, the figure was only 7 percent. The movement is in the right direction, having increased from total exports of only US\$21 billion in 1980, to US\$28 billion in 1985, to US\$78 billion in 1990. Today, the European Union (EU) economies export more to East Asia than to the United States.

But it is just as well to remember that in 1990, which by East Asian standards is a long time ago, East Asia was already importing US\$658 billion from the outside world. Thirty percent of that is close to US\$200 billion. This is twice as large as the EU's total exports to the United States and seven times more than the EU's exports to all of Latin America in 1993. Indeed, it is US\$25 billion more than the European Union's combined total exports last year to the United States, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

The potential for Western Europe is enormous. The IMF predicts that in the 1990s, US\$7.5 trillion will be added to the gross world product. Half of that will be produced by East Asia.

The recent European Commission policy paper, "Towards a New Asia Strategy" concurs with the view of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which is almost identical with the analysis of the World Bank. The European Commission goes on to state that by the year 2000, which is only 62 months away, 400 million Asians "will have average disposable incomes as high, if not higher, than their European or US contemporaries." As you who are in business know, goods and services are sold to

individual customers, not to states and regions. By the year 2000, there will be many more well off or rich East Asians than well off or rich Europeans and North Americans.

To cite further the European Commission, "half the growth in world trade up to the year 2000 will be generated in East Asia. This holds out enormous opportunities for the (European) Union and can create many jobs."

Many of today's realities already "boggle the mind". You might be interested to know, for example, that the United States exports more to my small country, Malaysia, than it exports to all of Eastern Europe and Russia. In purchasing power parity terms, the East Asian regional economy became bigger than both the Western European and the North American regional economies in 1992. In terms of foreign exchange US dollars, this should happen in the early months of the year 2000.

The potential beyond this 62-month horizon, must surely challenge even the most creative of imaginations.

You who are from Western Europe must sell us more. It is good for you. It is also good for us, for we must not forget that consumers buy for their own benefit and satisfaction, not for the benefit and satisfaction of those who produce.

But for Western Europe to trade much more with us in East Asia, there is need first of all for a fundamental awareness revolution.

I know that you who are here today are fully aware about East Asia. But you must often be quite frustrated by those at headquarters and in Europe, all of whom think they are open minded and global participants, most of whom are in fact incredibly Eurocentric and often incredibly unaware that they are so.

I am reminded of Marshall McLuhan's remark: "I do not know who discovered water, but I know it wasn't the fish." Sometimes it is only from the outside that one can clearly perceive the obvious truth.

The obvious truth is that most of Europe has still to wake up to what has been called "the East Asian miracle". Europe still has to truly discover Asia. The last time around, it required a heroic effort and sometimes wondrous exploits of courage and persistence by men of adventure. Perhaps this time around, it will also require a heroic effort and more than the occasional wondrous exploit of courage and persistence from men and women of the business world.

On the other side of the equation, it is equally clear that East Asians too have to fully discover Western Europe.

In 1990, East Asia accounted for 23.7 percent of total world output. But in the same year, East Asia supplied only 8.8 percent of the total imports of the European Community.

This is not really bad given that East Asia is only two thirds the economic size of Western Europe. But the truth remains: in 1992, the European Union economies alone imported almost as much as East Asia - US\$636 billion. Twenty-three percent of that is US\$146 billion.

I have talked about trade, which is the lowest, though the most important, form of economic cooperation between nations. Equally important is investment.

How has Europe done? Unfortunately, not well.

In the 1960s, the European Community grew on average by 4.5 percent a year. East Asia grew on average by 7.1 percent. In the 1970s, the EC economies grew on average by 3.3 percent a year. East Asia averaged 7.9 percent. In the 1980s, the EC averaged 1.7 percent. East Asia averaged 6.4 percent. So far in the 1990s, East Asia has been running at over 6 percent per annum, recession or no recession elsewhere. Overall these miracle years, when the East Asian economies were galloping, Europe's investment position - in some countries European companies not too long ago held all the commanding heights - has either been eroding rapidly or simply collapsing. The European Commission sadly notes that in the years between 1986 and 1992, only 10 percent of the foreign direct investment in East Asia came from the European Union.

There are many other economic issues that I should mention. Because of the time constraint, let me say a few words about human resource development and technology transfer and cooperation. The importance I attach to this should be clear from the countless visits I have made to Europe. Many say that European companies are much better at transferring technology than, say, Japanese companies. Nevertheless, the most tangible results of technology transfer to Malaysia are still those from the Japanese. True, we have to squeeze it from them, but in the end we got nearly all that we need. When we suggested that cars should be assembled in Malaysia, many great names just quit the market. And we in East Asia have a great deal to learn. Speaking for Malaysia, and I believe, for ASEAN too, let me say that we are eager to learn. And we fully appreciate all the gestures that have been made to help us with our programmes for human resource development and technology acquisition and development.

There are also a great many things that I should say about the political side of the Europe-East Asia nexus. Because of time constraints again, let me concentrate on only one dimension, a dimension that has been well articulated by the European Commission.

The Commission urges the EU to continue to strengthen the Union's bilateral relations with individual countries and sub-regions in Asia. It urges support for the efforts of Asian countries to cooperate at the regional and sub-regional level. It specifically mentions the ASEAN Regional Forum and calls for efforts to strengthen the EU's relations with ASEAN and the South Asia Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

What I found particularly striking are these words, uttered at the very beginning of the Commission's policy paper: "Asia's growing economic weight is inevitably generating increasing pressures for a greater role in world affairs. At the same time, the ending of the Cold War has created a regional environment of unparalleled political fluidity. Consequently, the European Union should seek to develop its political dialogue with Asia and should look for ways to associate Asia more and more with



the management of international affairs, working towards a partnership of equals, capable of playing a constructive and stabilising role in the world."

The age of hegemony has not yet quite passed. It should die away. We should bury it. Europe, East Asia, Africa, the Americas, all parts of the world, should indeed seek to work for a partnership of equals.

The European Union now already has a regular dialogue process with ASEAN. If Western Europe believes there should be a regular dialogue between Western Europe and East Asia, this is an idea which should be seriously explored.

Let me re-state one of the central themes that runs through my remarks. There is an urgent need for a revolution of the minds, the most rapid transformation of mind sets. Fundamental to the new partnership of equals that the European Commission talks about is a mental revolution.

Europe must decide its priorities. Is economics in command? Or is economics not in command? As ye sow, so shall ye reap.

Europe must increasingly not only understand but also appreciate pluralism.

Bad governance should attract the condemnation of all mankind. Atrocities are atrocities wherever they occur. But why is it that so many from Europe understand and appreciate the fact that Asian music should develop along its own path and should not be great imitations of the Beatles, Aznavour, Mozart and the Modern Jazz Quartet? And yet so many cannot tolerate any Asian form of governance that is not a fair copy of the European form.

• Why is it that so many from Europe understand and appreciate Asian art and celebrate its enormous diversity and take it as only natural that it is not a carbon copy of European art? And yet so many insist that Asian ways of business and economics, politics and administration cannot be legitimate unless they are carbon copies of European ways.

There can be no real movement towards "a partnership of equals" until there is a greater equalisation of humility and the disappearance of what some will call incredible arrogance.

Many in Asia look at the state of Europe. In their more exuberant moments, there are many Asian leaders, I am sure, who think they can solve Serbian atrocities in Bosnia, the Basque problem, the income inequalities between northern and southern Italy, the problem of homelessness in rich societies, drug addiction, classroom violence, vandalism and the ridiculous health systems. There are some societies where there are more illegitimate babies born than legitimate ones. There are countries where large numbers in their thirties or even forties have never worked for a single day of their lives. There are places where an unemployed person is better off not working than if he found a job. There are some polities where political leaders are afraid to do what they know is right, for one reason or another. There are economies where employers can only afford to retrench when they are doing well and cannot afford to trim their staff when they are doing badly. There are so many countries where people expect to earn more and more for doing less and less. And the people and the leaders in most European countries live in fear, fear of the free media which they so loudly proclaim as inviolable. Everyone is entitled to privacy except when the media choose to invade it. It has become a many-headed hydra which sours everything on which it breathes. Publicly they breathe in the foulness of the breath, but privately they express their abhorrence. Such is the monster of their own making.

Many Asian leaders, in their moments of levity, let me hasten to add, believe that they have the answers to such problems. If some European countries want their help and advice, I am sure they would be willing to give such help and advice. But so far, it has not entered the mind of any Asian leader to threaten sanctions if any European country fails to put its house in order. No Asian parliament I am aware of has passed a single resolution calling on its government to take steps should a European country not reform itself.

If any Asian leader were to so threaten or if any Asian parliament were to so act, the West would regard them as mad. The West would regard the whole idea as preposterous.

But, reflect. If it is preposterous and mad for Asian leaders to threaten sanction when Europeans fail to measure up to their standards and norms, could it not be equally preposterous for Europeans to threaten sanction when Asian countries prefer their own standards and not Europe's?

Europe has now called for "a partnership of equals capable of playing a constructive and stabilising role in the world." Let me add that this partnership of equals must serve not only the interests of Europe and Asia but also the entire world. It must be an important element of the new world order I spoke of, an order characterised by cooperative global prosperity, democratic governance, with greater global equality, fraternity and caring, and much more mutual respect.

# ***“The 1994 China Summit Meeting”***

*(China's market economy:  
The ASEAN Perspective)  
Beijing, China, 11 May 1994*

I have been asked to talk on the subject of “The Socialist Market Economy of the People’s Republic of China: the ASEAN Perspective.” First, how would I critique the Chinese development objectives and experiences? Second, what advice do I have, as the leader of perhaps the second most dynamic economy after China, for the Chinese leadership on the economic path they have chosen? I have also been asked to focus my address on the lessons of the development experiences of Malaysia and the ASEAN nations as they relate to China’s present situation. Lastly, what is ASEAN’s position on China’s aspirations?

I cannot of course speak for ASEAN. Yet I feel reasonably sure that my views are very close to an overpowering consensus of the thinking not only of ASEAN but also of all of East Asia, stretching from the Korean Peninsula to the farthest reaches of the Indonesian archipelago.

As Asians, we intuitively understand what China is attempting to do. We intuitively understand why China is doing what it is attempting to do. We intuitively understand how China

is going about the entire process of revolutionising its society and building towards a place of pride and comprehensive prosperity for its people in the twenty-first century. Perhaps this is because almost all of us are trying to do the same:-

- in the best way we know how;
- given the complexities of our own specific situations;
- given the enormous obstacles that stand in the way; and
- the incredible opportunities that are before us.

In a sense, therefore, even though I cannot speak for ASEAN, I believe that in much of what I say I will in fact be reflecting the view of most East Asians.

Let me also begin by saying that in all humility I will not critique China's policies and I will offer no specific advice to the Chinese leadership. As an individual, I have of course followed with a great deal of interest over the last 60 years of my life, the great events occurring in and around China. I have read substantially about China's last 2,000 years. But I am by no stretch of the imagination, an expert on China.

I cannot imagine that I know more about any Chinese policy than the Chinese leadership and its wealth of advisers.

I also come from a country - a part of which was under authoritarian colonial rule - for more than five hundred years. For a very long time, most of what is now Malaysia lived under a system in which we had to ask for 'advice' from the imperial power before we could do anything. Under this system of 'advice', all advice solicited or unsolicited had to be followed. You will understand why I am reticent about outsiders giving advice — even when asked for. Perhaps there is some virtue in not doing unto others what others have done unto you.

In the 1970s and 1980s, my country was villified and ridiculed for our New Economic Policy. This Policy was aimed at eradicating poverty and restructuring our society so that we would not only have rapid growth but also income and ownership restructuring and greater social justice. We were constantly badgered and advised to give it up. We were constantly scolded even by people who were themselves busy

redistributing wealth in forceful ways, for example by nationalisation or affirmative action.

We tinkered. We fine-tuned. We amended. We changed what did not work. We went fast track. We slowed down. And in the end, after it had achieved much of what we aimed for, we decided not to extend it but to formulate a slightly improved version which we called the National Development Policy. But to the outsiders, we were stubborn. We were obstinate. We were recalcitrant. We refused to listen and to accept good advice. And of course they say in the tone of the 'I told you so' critics that we had failed and been forced to change our course.

Still after the undeniable results that have been achieved over the 20 years of our New Economic Policy, some have quietly acknowledged that we are one of the very few examples of societal restructuring which others should follow. Many countries are now advised to look at Malaysia's example of marrying dynamic and sustained economic growth (an average 6.7 per cent over two decades) with massive wealth redistribution and dramatic advances towards socio-economic egalitarianism between ethnic and social groups.

If I may, I would like to tell another story. In my country's history, it is the Western countries which fought against giving us freedom and democracy. In the last couple of hundred years, the only authoritarian rule we have known have been British authoritarian and, for some, totalitarian rule, and for a short period, Japanese totalitarian rule. We have been extremely fortunate that since our independence 37 years ago, we have been a successful democracy. If you care to look around, you will notice that the political switch from authoritarian Governments to independent democratic Governments is not easily achieved. If you throw in a multi-racial population, the switch may not be achieved at all.

Most assuredly, our democracy is far from perfect, which is why we have specifically identified advances towards a more liberal democracy as one of the nine modernisations of our generational plan which we call Vision 2020. But we are not weighed down by 'gridlock'. For almost all of our 37 years of

independence, we have had stable and strong governments, repeatedly elected by the people. With strong Governments, we have been able to concentrate on doing what is right rather than what is popular. We have had leadership that is prepared to lead, that has always had to satisfy the people but never to pander excessively to the gallery. Fortunately, all our nine democratically elected central governments have never had to be pre-occupied with short-term political considerations at the expense of long-term welfare. We do not have a democratic system where the public good has to be sacrificed to powerful lobby groups. We are unashamedly community oriented. We do not believe that the rights of the individual come before the rights of society. In our elections, large percentages turn out to vote. Our majorities are not silent as in some Western democracies. We do not have constant, ultra-combative, confrontationist politics. There has always been a strong consensual impulse. Our press do not believe that it is their job to hound politicians, to tell lies and to adopt at all times the superior stance of king-makers. The people want enough Opposition Members of Parliament so that the Administration is kept on its toes. In several states, various Opposition parties have been voted into power. But few want them in power in the central Government. The ruling coalition party has always been broad-based, bringing together the widest range of political parties, ensuring the widest geographical representation.

But a world which tolerates and even encourages ethnic cleansing in Bosnia never tires of pointing out the inadequacies of Malaysian democracy. They seem unhappy that we are not assailed by the violence and instability that characterise most new democracies. They would love to see our Governments and policies change with each election, so that the uncertainties would deter investments for economic growth.

For what it is worth, I believe that whilst my country's success could not have been achieved without a democratic system of government, it would not have been possible without our particular form of democracy. Had we simply taken - lock, stock and barrel - a different democratic system that might have worked well elsewhere, we might today be in deep trouble.

I am certain that had we adopted the democratic system now in place in say, the United States, you may not have the Prime Minister of Malaysia in front of you today. He would be too busy dealing with riots and bombs in the Malaysian capital, assuming that a country called Malaysia still exists.

My country has had to listen to a lot of advice on how to run a Western-style democracy from the day it was born as a democratic independent state, sometimes, ironically, from experts who the day before had argued that we should not be given freedom and democracy because they were convinced we were not ready. Democracy becomes urgent only when territories have to be given up. Otherwise good old authoritarian government should go on.

I have said that we were lucky to have been born a democracy and to have evolved a productive Malaysian democracy. We were also lucky in that, unlike China, we have more or less always had a market system. Even so, ten years ago we started a process of further market reforms which have transformed us from an agricultural, commodity-exporting economy into a thriving industrial country. Only ten years ago, when we started our latest round of reforms, manufactured goods constituted only 25 per cent of all our exports. Last year, manufactured goods accounted for 71 per cent of a much-increased export volume. We are the 19th biggest trading nation in the world today.

We are now receiving reluctant accolades for our reforms of policy and practice over the last decade. Still the advice keeps pouring in, mostly gratuitous. Fortunately, through a mixture of good fortune and good judgement - more good fortune than good judgement - perhaps, we appear to have chosen the right advice.

Still, it is always wise to be open-minded, to be eager to learn from the experience of others, to seek outside advice. But no amount of intellectual brilliance and sincerity can overcome the iron law that in order for policies and actions to work, they must always fit the specific conditions within which they have to operate. God helps China if China were to adopt policies which



can perform miracles elsewhere but which would probably be disastrous for China. It surely must be the task of China's leaders and intelligentsia themselves to pick and choose from the methods of other countries which could possibly fit in with the conditions of China. The best thing that others can do is to be open about their own experiences, good and bad, to the Chinese, i.e. if they wish the Chinese well.

But I suspect the Chinese are not going to be allowed to do that. Already we see the Chinese being badgered and hectored to conform to systems and values which have been devised elsewhere for the benefit of different people. It would be a pity, for the world does not need an isolated and bitter China.

Let me now turn to the third task I have been asked to fulfil.

I have said that although I do not even speak for ASEAN, my views may well reflect that of East Asia, eight of whose economies (Japan, China, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia) are now commonly regarded as constituting 'the East Asian Miracle'. The reason is crystal clear and natural. Despite significant differences between us, all eight of us share the same basic perspectives. We actually present only one model of economic development.

The term 'socialist' means different things to different people. Whatever the subtleties, there is no doubt that China's 'socialist market economy' rejects laissez faire capitalism, the extreme type of market economy which regards the government as extraneous. With the possible (and only possible) exception of Hong Kong, all eight of us do reject laissez faire capitalism. We each have applied socialistic central planning and controls to some degree or other. Some have indeed tried state enterprises as a means of breaking into certain areas of business which involve greater risks or extremely long gestations.

Most certainly, all eight of us seem to agree that Governments are not good at business. Government managers do not have the kind of bottom line concerns as private managers. I am a strong believer that Governments have no

business to be in business. They have a role in regulating and curbing excesses. Left to themselves the private sector can breed predators which grow and grow, swallowing up their competitors, forming monopolies and cartels. Only Governments can curb their excesses and break them up when necessary.

However, a free-market economy, even when properly regulated, cannot guarantee success. Certainly it cannot succeed if the essentials are not in place. A country which has known only a command economy for three-quarters of a century cannot have the entrepreneurs, the private capital, the management know-how, the legal framework and the market without which the free market system cannot work. It would not be suicidal to switch from command to market-economy, but it would certainly require time and nurturing. China is right in not making a total and immediate switch. It is right in not attempting a radical political about turn simultaneously.

An anarchic situation is not going to facilitate the growth and flowering of a free market. Certainly it is not going to help the transition from a command economy to a market economy. China needs the strong Government that it has. It may be authoritarian, but it is better than anarchy. Business needs order. It needs to have a predictable future, for few businesses are immediately profitable or successful. The bigger the business, the longer is the gestation, and the greater is the need for a predictable future. A firm, strong Government can reasonably ensure a predictable future. A weak Government, depending upon a fickle public, buffeted by the demands of the extremists of the right and the left, cannot be stable, much less ensure predictability.

There is no such thing as a free lunch. And Governments, good Governments, cannot be had for free. A price will have to be paid. Before a good Government can be conjured up, sacrifices will have to be made.

For the 1.2 billion inhabitants of this great nation, individual freedom to go against the interest of the majority, is a luxury it can ill-afford now. The day will come when individual freedom

to disrupt and undermine the well-being of the great majority will be enshrined in the democratic values of China. But for the moment, the interest of the majority demands an orderly society.

Democracy is the greatest idea ever conceived by man. Like all such ideas it was not born perfect. Who today would regard 10 per cent of the population having the absolute right to rule a state as democratic? Yet that was the democracy in the Greek city states which first conceived democratic Government. In their view women and slaves had no rights.

It took centuries to improve the concept. Today democracy takes numerous forms. Even among the Western liberal democrats interpretations and practices differ. Some consider carrying guns as a fundamental right, others consider lying as an absolute right, others have various degrees of limitations on individual public behaviour, while others still hesitate at legally recognising homosexual marriages and families. What they do agree is that anything they do or do not do, is democratic and everybody else not in their circle, is undemocratic.

The worst part is the assumption that democratic Western countries can foist their principles through undemocratic means. They object to other ideologies being spread by subversion or force but they never hesitate to use these same methods of spreading their ideology. Sanctions, arm-twisting of various kinds and sustained campaigns through their controlled media are weapons they never hesitate to use. This proselytising for democracy veiled only slightly the objective of eliminating competition before it begins.

All this makes the task of governing and developing the developing countries much more difficult. This difficulty is made worse because everyone really wants to practise a democratic system of Government and accept the free-market economy. No one really wants authoritarian rule. But democratic anarchy and poverty, brought about by the inability of the free market system to function, create the conditions for opportunists with ambition to seize power and rule by fiat.

In East Asia we believe in democracy and we are anxious to

practise it. But we also believe in strong stable Governments that are not easily pressured. The liberal democracies of the West have not produced strong stable Governments. In some countries yearly changes of Government take place. For long periods there seems to be no Government at all. And when there is, the Government seems more anxious to preserve itself rather than provide good Government. Excessively populist Governments have no principles or policies or programmes. They merely try to satisfy just about everyone. And that is fatal. There is no way any Government can satisfy everyone.

On the other hand, the countries of East Asia, wanting to catch up in terms of development with the West, need stability and predictability. Countries with regularly changing Governments cannot have consistent policies especially towards investors. We cannot have one Government nationalising and the next privatising, or one giving incentives which are then withdrawn by the next one.

The problem is that democracy is inherently unstable. This is a virtue in itself. It is the fear of being thrown out that motivates democratic Governments to do their best for the people. But people are also fickle and extremely forgetful. And so despite providing good Government, there is no guarantee the people will not reject it at the next election. Changing Governments is disruptive. Indeed even changing leaders is often disruptive. The virtues of instability are negated by the drawbacks.

The successful economies of East Asia have somehow managed to give the people democratic rights, without undermining the effectiveness of Governments. It is not unusual for the same party to be returned again and again with strong majorities intact.

The competing economies of the West are not happy with this. It puts them at a disadvantage. They would like the East Asian democracies to be weak and unstable like theirs, or worse. Maybe there is no grand conspiracy by the West to undermine all the East Asian economies. But conspiracy is not necessary. It is sufficient for everyone to see the danger threatening them for them to act in the same way.

The early attempts to disguise their intention by talking about democracy and human rights, etc. have now been largely jettisoned. Now they are openly proposing to eliminate the competitiveness of the East Asian economies in order to prevent them from successfully competing with the West.

The proposal for a worldwide minimum wage is one blatant example. They know very well that this is the sole comparative advantage of the developing countries. They know that all the other comparative advantages; technology, capital, rich domestic markets, legal framework, management and marketing network are with the developed countries. Indeed they had made sure that their technology is considered as intellectual property and cannot be used or copied by the developing countries without the additional cost of hefty royalties. They know if the sole comparative advantage of the developing countries is taken away from them, they would be unable to compete. Yet they pushed for this so-called social clause at the recent Final Act of the GATT Round, openly declaring that low wages give an advantage to the developing countries.

Since it is obvious that the concern about workers' welfare is motivated by selfish interest, it is equally likely that the sanctimonious pronouncements on humanitarian, democratic and environmental issues are motivated by the same selfish interest - the desire to put as many obstacles as possible in the way of anyone attempting to catch up and compete with the West. They made a mistake with Japan. They are not going to make any more mistakes.

I have already said that although I cannot presume to speak for ASEAN, much of what I say would reflect the common thinking of the South East Asians and the East Asians. This is because we are all in the same boat.

I have said that China did right in sticking to its brand of socialist politics while espousing a version of the market economy. It is right because it has managed to avoid the kind of economic and political anarchy that the Soviet Union has suffered. It is right because it is apparently more successful economically. It is growing and growing very fast.

When a country of 1.2 billion does anything it will have world-shaking effect. South East Asia is very close to China. Obviously it is going to feel the tremor more than most other parts of the world.

We in South East Asia have always felt the influence of China. Almost without exception, we have Chinese minorities, some very substantial. There is even a Chinese state in our midst now. We understand the Chinese and we understand China.

When a country is poor it cannot expend much on the armed forces. When a country becomes rich, even if it spends the same percentage on the military, the absolute amount is going to be considerable. Japan was told to spend not more than one per cent of its GNP on the armed forces. In 1945 that was a tiny sum. Today one per cent of Japan's GNP would exceed the military budget of most Western countries.

Similarly, a rich China would spend much more than what it is spending now on its forces. It will then become a true world power and have the attendant economic and political clout.

But historically, China has not exhibited any consistent policy of territorial acquisitiveness. Its neighbours may have lost some disputed territory, but full invasion and colonisation has not been a feature of Chinese history. This differs very much of course from the European record.

This question of Chinese aggression occupies much of the Western mind. This is because historically, hegemony and violent or peaceful occupation of territories had always been the West's approach to self-preservation and wealth. So now they naturally suspect China of having similar ambitions.

If South East Asia is not apprehensive of Japan, it should not be worried about China. If we must be apprehensive, we must be apprehensive of both. The presence of a Western power will not make a difference especially after Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda. It takes only one soldier to be killed before the whole force will be withdrawn.

On the other hand, a prosperous China will become the engine of growth firstly for East Asia, including South East Asia, and then the world. If 1.2 billion Chinese are half as rich as the Americans, the size of the market will be almost unimaginable.

Although it can be expected that China will export to the world, it will still have to buy a whole lot of things from the rest of the world. The South East Asian countries would have a huge market for its edible oil, gas and petroleum products, and even manufactured goods at their doorsteps.

On the other hand, China cannot remain competitive forever. Its cost of production will go up and its ability to export would be reduced. The South East Asian countries would continue to benefit.

South East Asia should have no fear of a wealthy and strong China. Indeed South East Asia should welcome a wealthy China. They will share in the wealth through trade and economic interaction.

In the 'Socialist Market Economy' the Chinese have found an answer to their political and economic needs. Admittedly, spreading wealth evenly in a market economy is far more difficult than spreading poverty evenly through the command economy. There will be many political problems, not least the demand for greater public participation in the political process. The Government will have to give in, fighting rearguard action all along the retreat. There may even be some upheavals and bloodshed along the way. But the Chinese are likely to handle it better than the Russians or the Yugoslavs.

East and South East Asians can reasonably expect this scenario as being more likely than that projected by European and American observers. With China's modernisation and economic development, the wheel of progress would have turned a full circle and Asia would, at the very least, regain its place in the world's civilisation. Europeans may not like this, but there is no reason for Asians to actively assist them in order to block China and delay Asia's rightful place in the sun.

# *The International Conference Of Parliamentarians On Bosnia-Herzegovina*

*(Issues on Bosnia-Herzegovina)*

*Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

*22 January 1994*

The subject matter of our common concern is a grave one. The situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is extremely critical. The human tragedy is massive and continuing. The severe winter is expected to add to the number of deaths because people are being deprived of the basic necessities to stay alive.

It would be your duty, as parliamentarians, to cause your respective governments to help change the situation in that unfortunate country, and save the valiant people of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Let me recount very briefly what has happened to Bosnia-Herzegovina, which began with the first Serbian shelling of Sarajevo in May 1992. It was the same month that the United Nations (U.N.) accepted the new Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a member state. The significance was clear. Serbs had served notice that they care nothing for world opinion or the norms of human behaviour.

Everyone knows now that it was all part of the grand plan of Slobodan Milosevic to bring into being a Greater Serbia. When



Bosnia-Herzegovina became independent, he turned over the Serbian army's arsenals in that country to the Bosnian Serb soldiers resident in Bosnia-Herzegovina and to Serb civilians. No arms were given to the Bosnian members of the Yugoslav army who did not subscribe to Milosevic's Greater Serbia ambitions. Thus did Milosevic ensure that Serbian aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina will meet with success. The U.N. embargo on arms for the combatants in Yugoslavia merely serve to weaken the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina further and enable Karadzic's Serbs to massacre the Bosnian Muslims.

It is not correct to assume that the bloodbath in Bosnia-Herzegovina is a civil war between the Muslims and the rest. Although most of the defenders of Sarajevo are Muslims, who call themselves Bosnians, many Serbs and Croats are included in their number. The mix is also reflected in the government. They are all Bosnians and Herzegovinans.

The Bosnian Government desperately appealed for help from the vaunted defenders of human rights of the world. Bosnians were being killed and Bosnia-Herzegovina was about to be dismembered. But neither the European Union nor the United Nations Security Council took decisive actions. Humanitarian aid was offered, subject to permission being granted by the Serbian aggressors. And as can be expected, the Serbs were not quite cooperative. U.N. forces protecting food convoys may not hurt the Serbs under any circumstances. In other words, the Bosnians by consent of the U.N., are placed at the mercy of their Serbian oppressors.

At the same time, a well-conceived and successful strategy began to split the peoples of the newly formed country. It resulted in the Croats in Bosnia abandoning their Bosnian identity and discarding their traditional alliance with the Bosnian Muslims.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is the victim of the evil designs of certain people and powers who are quite happy to see the emergence of Slovenia and Croatia but will do nothing for Bosnia, although Bosnia-Herzegovina has as much right as the other two to nationhood. This kind of double standard is apparently what the New World Order is about.

The London international conference had pledged that it would not recognise any advantage gained by force or the creation of facts. Yet Vance and Owen put together a package based on ground realities which would effectively legitimise territorial acquisition by force, ethnic cleansing and partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina along ethnic lines. And in Geneva, they saw fit to place the leadership of the legitimate and internationally recognised Bosnian government on an equal footing with the insurgent Serbs and the Croats. Thus are aggressors legitimised.

The Geneva process, now presided by Owen and Stoltenberg, is bent on forcing the Bosnians to accept Serbian occupation as a basis for settlement. Certain countries which have participated in the U.N. peacekeeping forces are threatening to withdraw the minimal protection they afforded the Bosnians unless the latter agree to Owen's surrender of Bosnian territories to the Serbs. History is repeating itself. The spirit of Chamberlain lives and the result is another Holocaust.

The carnage and destruction in Bosnia-Herzegovina continues without relent. Sarajevo remains under siege until this day, surrounded by Serbian guns capable of delivering 800 rounds of shells each day. For the fifth time, the Western nations have threatened to launch air-strikes against the Serbs unless they stop strangling Sarajevo. And for the fifth time, the Serbs have thumbed their noses at these so-called righteous great powers. Of course, no air-strike is mounted.

Aggression, occupation and the redrawing of territorial boundaries by force is unacceptable in this day and age. But, when aggression is accompanied by the abominable practice of ethnic cleansing, it is not just unacceptable, but despicable, by any standard of international behaviour. And yet the Serbs complement this with rape and murder of young girls and women, even of little children. The so-called civilised world is horrified, but is not prepared to stop the Serbs. Yet woe betide any little developing country which violates even the most trivial of human rights.

The Serbs know that the bark of these defenders of human rights is worse than their bite. And so they will go on raping and murdering, fully convinced that they will not only go unpunished, but they will be actually rewarded. We know that nations are usually hypocritical when conducting foreign relations. But the attitude of the powerful nations in the Bosnian affair must epitomise hypocrisy at its worse.

Today, the Bosnians are confronted with the choice - either accept the tattered remnants of Bosnia-Herzegovina or risk being violently wiped off the map of the world. They are right in refusing to accept either. They are right in continuing to fight for their country. The cost to them is very high. The killings are real. People are dying. People are being starved, raped and tortured. Unless the civilised world puts a stop to what is going on in Bosnia-Herzegovina, weak nations will know no freedom. Might will always be right. Is this the message of Bosnia? Where are the champions of freedom, of human rights, of justice? Where have they gone?

It is immoral for all of us to hide behind the illusion that the issue of Bosnia-Herzegovina is the story of a simple civil war. It is not. It is nothing less than a war of conquest by the Serbs, abetted by others who have their own hidden agendas.

The Americans are blaming the British and the French for preventing the use of air strikes against the Serbs. However, some very highly placed British and French sources have told me that it is the United States which is against military action against the Serbs. I frankly do not know whom to believe. I suspect that neither the Americans nor the Europeans care enough to act. They do not wish to risk the lives of their boys for something that is not really very important for their own well-being.

If this is the case, then they should allow the Bosnians to defend themselves. This is the right of any nation or people - the right to self-defence. But they actively and positively prevent the Bosnians from acquiring the means to fight for their own self-defence. The Western nations could not have done worse if

they were to hold down the Bosnians so as to enable the Serbs to batter them. It is abetment and no less.

And yet they claim that they are helping the Bosnians:

There is really no unity of support for the European Union's official position regarding Bosnia-Herzegovina. There is general dissatisfaction with the Owen peace package. There is dissatisfaction with Owen's lack of consultation with the European Union which appointed him and whose creature he is supposed to be. There is dissatisfaction with the way Owen is handling the so-called peace process.

It is obvious that so far no one has really approved of what the Serbs are doing. Indeed, everyone including the Vatican, the Anglican Church, the various Non-Governmental Organisations, the Western media even, and the Western military commanders assigned to the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), all have condemned Serbian aggression. U.N. commanders regularly resigned because they were not allowed by Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the Security Council to take effective action to stop Serbian brutality. But the Western Governments remain obdurate, refusing to see anything wrong in their blatant disregard for the wholesale violations of every item of human rights by the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Your task, as parliamentarians, is to help shock the people and your Governments out of their self-imposed stupor. The Governments especially must not be allowed to believe that they can get away with their hypocrisy and still survive. You must do your best to force those in power to act.

I believe there are two things you can do. The first is to exert pressure on the U.N. Security Council to implement the various resolutions which the Council has already passed. For example, despite systematic and widespread obstruction to the delivery of international humanitarian assistance, there has been no effort to enforce Security Council resolution 770 which provides for the use of all necessary means. Security Council resolution 836 created 'safe areas' but relentless military actions by the Serbs have instead turned these safe areas into areas under siege.

The Security Council must now demand, and must be prepared to back its demand by the use of force if necessary - not mere threats but actual use of force, to make the aggressors comply with certain critical requirements. Among others:

- The siege of Sarajevo must be lifted forthwith, by silencing or removing the Serbian big guns from around the city;
- All concerned parties must be made to permit, by force if necessary, the unhindered flow of humanitarian assistance;
- Tuzla airport must be opened to enable food, medicines and other essentials to reach the major surrounding towns.

These actions are necessary especially to save innocent lives during the harsh winter. But we must be clear about one thing. No amount of humanitarian action is going to put an end to the tragedy in Bosnia. What is needed is political and diplomatic action, supported by the use of force when necessary.

Therefore, the second thing you should do is to urge the Security Council to take a hard look at the Geneva process, and since there is wide agreement that the Geneva talks cannot go on as before, seize the initiative to convene a new international conference on Bosnia-Herzegovina. Perhaps the successful international conference on Cambodia could serve as a model. There, not only the relevant parties but other concerned countries also participated, and helped provide the diplomatic weight.

There is no point in having a second or third London conference unless the principles already adopted in the first conference are implemented.

We cannot speak for the Bosnian leadership but we can demand that they be given a chance to save their people and their country and a fair deal in negotiations. Malaysia feels extremely concerned, not merely because Bosnia-Herzegovina has something to do with Islam and Muslims. We feel strongly whenever and wherever injustice and oppression are

perpetrated. Malaysia has been equally vehement about South Africa, about Cambodia and other non-Muslim communities which have faced similar problems.

The Serbs and the Croats have not succeeded in destroying the essence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. After nearly two years of unceasing assault, and long after the Western experts have written it off, the Republic is still alive. We cannot, and should not, forget Bosnia-Herzegovina. If we accept aggression and violence by strong neighbours as legitimate, then many of us who are weak will suffer the same fate.

Bosnia-Herzegovina used to be a cultural mix where the people lived in peace. It has as strong a historic claim to exist as do its neighbours.

The fundamental principle of the right of nation states to exist must remain sacred and must be protected. This includes small, multi-ethnic and multi-religious states like Bosnia-Herzegovina.

If we allow the law of the jungle to apply, if we allow the strongest to determine the fate of the weakest, if we allow Bosnia-Herzegovina to be obliterated, then there will be no security for anyone of us.

I urge you parliamentarians, therefore, to request your respective governments to:

- Place the issue of Bosnia-Herzegovina high on your country's international agenda;
- Commit the weight of your nation's diplomacy to call for the restarting of meaningful talks aimed at a lasting and just settlement; and
- Assert your rights as members of the United Nations to insist that the Security Council act decisively to end the sufferings of the Bosnian people and bring back peace to that country.

# *The Plenary Of The Forty-Eighth Session Of The United Nations General Assembly*

*(Human rights and democracy)*

*New York, USA, 1 October 1993*

Malaysia is a developing Third World country. We should, according to the stereotypical Western concept of a Third World country, be politically unstable, administratively incompetent and economically depressed.

But we are not quite typical. We have actually made progress. We are quite stable despite a multi-racial time-bomb we inherited from our colonial past. We are fairly competent in the running of our affairs. Such is our progress that we actually contemplate building buildings which should be the preserve of our betters.

And we dare to speak our minds.

These are unforgiveable sins and we are reminded every time that we should not be too ambitious. We are told that our achievements are temporary, that next year we would go the way of their preconceived Third World countries. Of course last year and the years before we were told the same. But so far we have not obliged. We are however, humbly aware that nothing is permanent. Our detractors may yet prove right.

That we do well and are not in dire need of their development aid is apparently not praiseworthy. Yet, when other developing countries perform badly they are chastised and told to do better, or they would get no more aid or loans.

But we will soldier on. We really should not care about what is said of us. Unfortunately, these negative remarks make life that much more difficult for us.

We need foreign investment. To have them, we need a reputation for stability, competence and predictability. But when investors are told repeatedly that we are about to explode in racial violence, etc., they are likely to invest elsewhere. Of course what is said about us is untrue, lies. But these people apparently subscribe to the dictum, that a lie repeated often enough, will be believed.

We care for the well-being of our people. We want to develop so as to give them a reasonable standard of living. But we cannot be cowed into not speaking our minds. If the powerful nations do wrong, we will speak out against them even if they say we are unduly suspicious, that we have an exaggerated sense of our own importance, etc. We can be belittled, but we will continue to speak the truth.

Here at the U.N. we will say what we feel we should say. Of course the controlled 'free' Western media will not publish it. But the few here will hear us. In any case, it is what we achieve that counts with us. We can do without Western approval.

Four or five years ago the world was celebrating the impending collapse of the 'Evil Empire'. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was still intact then, but all indications were that it had given up the fight; that it was coming to terms with its main adversaries, the countries of the Western so-called Free World; and that the Cold War was drawing to a close.

Peace was breaking out all over the world and there was much talk of 'peace dividends'. The arms race would end, there would be nuclear disarmament, and as the saying goes, the guns would be turned into ploughshares. A brave new world would emerge: equitable, just and prosperous. There would be no oppression, no terror and no poverty or starvation.



Everyone would embrace democracy and the market economy, transiting from authoritarian rule and command economy without any hitches. And a global policeman would see to it that every country stay in line or face the consequences. There was no end to the good things that would make up the 'peace dividends'.

It would be wrong to say that there were no 'peace dividends' at all - the Iran-Iraq War, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the war in Cambodia, some of the Central American wars, and now the violent Palestinian-Israeli confrontation and South Africa's apartheid; these did get resolved, partially or completely. But the world has not become a safer or a better place for a great many.

The Soviet Union did not just become democratic practitioners of free trade, working with the good guys for a better world. It broke up into a number of republics, and Russia has become dangerously unstable and ungovernable. The respected great reformer of Perestroika and Glasnost fame has been ousted and disgraced and has been replaced by another who seems to fare no better.

The 'Evil Empire' is no more. But the price in human lives and displacement of people is very high. And the price is still being paid.

In Georgia, Moldavia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, much destruction and many killings have taken place and are still taking place. The old economic structure has been destroyed, but the new one is far from being in place. Chaos, bloody chaos, prevails in many places.

Far from achieving universal peace, the world is treated to a spectacle of unparalleled brutality by the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In many countries of Europe, Fascism has once again reared its ugly head. Houses are torched and people burned to death. And the voters actually approved.

During the Cold War days, the protagonists tried constantly to provoke uprisings against Governments of the countries they were opposed to. They would provide financial and material

help and the promise that they would protect these rebels or provide them with asylum.

With the collapse of the Communist bloc, the people there expected help when they overthrew their Communist Governments and established democratic free market societies or they sought independence for their countries. In some instances, they found their expectations justified. The Slovenes and the Croats enjoyed the full support of the Europeans and were able to mould new nations. But the Kurds and the Bosnians learnt that they thought wrong. It is only coincidental that both are Muslim communities.

The most tragic case is that of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The crime of the Muslims is that they wish for a non-Muslim religiously heterogenous state. They were viciously attacked by the Serbs who openly declared that they were, and are doing this, to ensure that Europe remains Christian. They are not prevented by the Europeans.

The cruelties committed by the Serbs defy imagination. In one case, which caused officials in one of the powerful countries of the West to resign in protest over their Government's passivity, a six-year-old child was repeatedly raped in front of her mother who not only had to watch but was prevented from giving any help until the little child died after two days of exposure.

This is not an isolated incident. Muslim women, old and young and little girls were raped, brutalised and killed by the tens of thousands at the hands of the Serbs and the Croats.

Hundreds of thousands of Muslims have died and are dying, and some two million have been forced to flee from their burning towns and villages.

And what do the erstwhile champions of freedom and democracy do? They actually prevented the victims from defending themselves. Instead they try to force the victims to accept the partitioning and surrender of their territories which had been ethnically-cleansed by the Serbs and Croats. Thus are the rapers and murders to be rewarded? Only the most gullible

will still believe that the vociferous champions of freedom and democracy will risk their necks for other people's freedom and democracy.

Malaysia would like to record its satisfaction over the acceptance of Malaysian troops to serve in the U.N. forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We regret, however, the exclusion of certain Muslim countries from participating in the UNPROFOR. Apparently the distrust of Muslims is quite widespread.

Malaysians are prepared to serve under whoever is appointed by the U.N. in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We hope that our troops will be well-supported. We will not protest if the U.N. decides to increase pressure on the Serbs, including mounting a military offensive, provided due preparations are made.

When we add up, the 'peace dividends' accruing from the ending of the Cold War have not been really substantial. If at all, the debit side is much bigger than the credit side. The most glaring example is the renegeing on the much needed development assistance to poor developing countries.

Still when drawing up the balance sheet from the ending of the Cold War, one cannot but highlight two significant items on the credit side. The recent signing of the PLO-Israeli peace agreement and that between blacks and whites in South Africa, must be regarded as the biggest achievements of the post-Cold War period. Admittedly, there is still a great deal to be negotiated before justice can be rendered to all sides and before true peace becomes permanent. But the most crucial parts are over.

I would like to congratulate all the parties concerned for their good sense and their boldness. The extremists on both sides will not be happy. There will be more violence. But I am sure those who are for peace and good sense will be as brave in peace, as they have been in war.

I commend this accord to the good people of Northern Ireland. It is brave not to surrender even one inch. But it takes real bravery to compromise.

One may well ask why in the face of the much-publicised failure of the U.S. sponsored peace talks, there should be this sudden breakthrough? The answer is to be found in the Press statements. Good sense cannot prevail when the media demands that statements be made by each and everyone before and after each negotiating session. The negotiators are forced to make public stands, to demonstrate how tough they are and how they will not give in even an inch. Having made these stands, they were not able to accommodate good sense anymore.

In the peace talks in Norway, there was no Press. And good sense was able to prevail. There is this great democratic principle about the need to know. Do we all really need to know every detail of every negotiation? Does every Israeli settler or Gaza Strip Arab, or for that matter every Tom, Dick and Harry in every part of the world need to know everything about the negotiations? Must Palestinians continue to be killed and be made homeless because everybody needs to know what was said by whom?

This need for transparency, this right to information, is an invention of those who want to make money from the information industry. We should know about the bestiality of the Serbs in Bosnia so we may react. But this knowledge is largely denied us. On the other hand, we are shown this parade of negotiators to a peace conference day in and day out. Can the average man do anything worthwhile because he has seen the daily TV report?

We live in the Information Age. There has been, and there will continue to be, an unending explosion in the field of information technology.

Today we can sit in our homes and watch and hear a war as it is being fought; witness with eyes and ears a beauty contest as it is being judged and look at bugs under a microscope as it swims, via the TV screen. We see all these as they are, where they are, without a second's delay.

We can watch murder as it is being committed, in all the gory details. And we can be shocked by it. But then we can also watch Michael Jackson doing his 'moon-walk' even as mass murder and massacres of the most brutal kinds are being committed at that very moment.

What we see and hear and witness, Mr President, is what the media decide we should see and hear and witness. If the media wants us to be shocked by the massacre, it can broadcast lurid details of that massacre. But if it chooses to broadcast Michael Jackson at the time the massacre was taking place, we will be stomping our feet in total enjoyment.

Clearly, the people who decide what we should see and hear, hold terrible power. They can have us dancing in the streets or they can have us rioting in the streets, with firebrands in our hands, burning, looting and killing.

Can we doubt that such people are powerful?

Make no mistake. The people who control the media control our minds, and probably control the world. Presidents can be made or broken by them. And they have. Countries can be isolated or accepted despite violations of human rights, depending on how the media presents them.

And who controls the powerful world media? Not the national Governments of tiny developing nations. Not even the Governments of powerful nations. A very few people in the West control all the international media. Some are journalists, but quite a few are not. Collectively they are Big Brothers.

Now they have an even more effective weapon in the form of the worldwide TV network. Today they broadcast slanted news. Tomorrow they will broadcast raw pornography to corrupt our children and destroy our culture. They are already doing that in Europe.

Today we can still control the reception. The day is fast approaching when only a coat-hanger would be needed to receive TV broadcasts from across the world.

We will have nowhere to retreat. Already the small nations are being accused of being undemocratic and limiting freedom

because we do not allow reception of international TV networks. We hope it is because our accusers believe in the freedom of the Press. But we suspect it is because they monopolise the world media and they stand to profit substantially from the freedom they insist every nation should have.

Malaysia believes in Press freedom. But that freedom, as with other freedoms and rights, must be accompanied by responsibility. We will continue to expect the Malaysian media to be responsible. We will not forego the need to enforce this responsibility. But as to the international Press, we can only hope and pray that they will realise the damage they are doing. We will not interfere with them. They are free to report and to write any amount of lies. But we do hope that occasionally they cover the truth also. Power corrupts. But power without responsibility is the most corrupting influence of all.

We have heard often enough of the need for restructuring the U.N. We need it because the world has changed. It is not the world of the immediate post-World War II that we have today.

The people who plunged the world into a horrendous war are now the good guys, telling the world how to be humane. The rapacious invaders of the past are now the good samaritans distributing aid to the needy. Will there always be no room for the reformed?

We talk of democracy as the only acceptable system of government. It is so good that we cannot wait for the democratic process to bring about its acceptance by every country. It must be forced upon everyone whether it is welcomed or not. Yet when it comes to the U.N., we eschew democracy. And the most undemocratic aspect of the U.N. is the veto power of the Permanent Five. We can accept some weightage for them, but for every one of them, alone, to be more powerful than the whole membership of the U.N. is not acceptable; not before, not now and not for the future. There can be for the time being some permanent members. But the veto must go. A formula must be found for new permanent members of the Security Council. Whatever may be the other qualifications, they must include a genuine and sincere interest in international welfare.

At the Ministerial Meeting in Vienna this year, a more comprehensive definition of Human Rights was presented. Many countries like Malaysia were smeared in Vienna for allegedly refusing to accept the universality of human rights. We do subscribe to the universality of human rights, but not to the irresponsible variety propounded by the West. Human rights are not a licence to do anything without regard to the rights of others. The rights of the majority are just as valid as the rights of the minority or the individual. A society has a right to protect itself from the unbridled exercise of rights by individuals or a minority, which in the West, has contributed to the collapse of morality and the structure of human society.

If individual and minority rights are so totally inviolable, then you must allow the resurgence of Nazism and their violently racist activities in Europe and elsewhere. But it is apparent that at least the West still thinks racist violence is wrong. We hope you will also accept that freedom from poverty and the wish to develop are also essential elements of human rights. Finally, countries like Malaysia must take exception to preachings on human rights from people who willingly condone, and to a certain degree, aid ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Until they redeem themselves there, all their talks of human rights sound hollow.

This litany of the woes of the developing countries and the world may seem endless. Actually the list is far from complete. Trade and protectionism, aid and debts, UNCED and pressures on environmental issues, Antarctica and many more, have not been touched upon.

The world of the post-Cold War period is not a thoroughly bad place. But for the developing countries including Malaysia, there is really very little to crow about.

A statement in the U.N. Assembly is not going to change the world. But there is really nowhere else that the woes of the Third World can be aired. Not to air them is to encourage the kind of supercilious arrogance on the part of those who are most responsible, and yet still presume to extoll their own virtues and to preach to others. Even if the benefit is minimal, the truth must be told sometime.

