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Singapore Government

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OPENING REMARKS BY PROFESSOR S JAYAKUMAR, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AT THE DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC LECTURE ORGANISED BY THE INSTITUTE OF DEFENCE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES, ON 2 JUNE 2000, AT THE MARINA MANDARIN

Your Excellency Jaswant Singh
Minister of External Affairs of India
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

1 The end of the Cold War and the emergence of a truly global economy is transforming the Asian strategic landscape. The strategic triangle of relations between the US, China and Japan remains the foundation of Asia-Pacific stability and growth. But in a global economy, East Asia and the Pacific cannot be so neatly separated from other parts of the larger continent of which it is inextricably linked by culture, history, geography and, increasingly, trade and investment flows. Economic geography no longer coincides neatly with political geography. Rather, a web of ever more tightly integrated and diverse economic relationships forms a complex overlay over traditional great power relations, creating a new type of geopolitics. Nor is strategy just a matter for the Generals and Ambassadors any longer. The Asian crisis of two years ago was a blunt

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reminder to all of us of how finance and economics can catalyse political and geopolitical changes. The consequences are still with us.

2 Great power relationships are themselves in a state of flux and evolution. Released from the Cold War ideological straightjacket, traditional patterns of great power interactions are re-emerging, and merging with new configurations. The Northeast Asian countries of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea are tentatively exploring closer ties among themselves, without relinquishing their trans-Pacific or other connections. China and Japan are exploring a new *modus vivendi*. Northeast Asia is enriching its traditional links with Southeast Asia and ASEAN. Post-Soviet Russia is grappling for a new Asian role, even as it wrestles with difficult internal problems and its relations with the US and Europe. Nor can events around the periphery of the Asian continent be totally divorced from potentially explosive developments in the vast interior. The interests of China, India, Russia, Pakistan and several newly independent states meet, intersect and react with each other and with profound cultural and religious forces in Central Asia.

3 India's relationship with Southeast Asia – cultural, political and economic – stretches back many centuries. The strategic and geopolitical changes that we have witnessed in the last decade or so has allowed India to re-engage in the region in a positive manner. India became an ASEAN sectoral dialogue partner in 1992 and a full dialogue partner three years later in 1995. It joined the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1996. That Forum was itself a response to the changes in the strategic environment that had occurred after the end of the Cold War. The ARF is an experiment - one that is still on-going - to positively engage all major powers with interests in the region and to encourage the development of a more predictable and constructive pattern of relationships among them.

4 Ladies and Gentlemen, only a clairvoyant would be foolhardy enough to try and predict how the major strategic shifts that I have briefly described will play themselves out. I am not clairvoyant, and I believe that the outcome of the processes that are currently underway cannot as yet be predicted with any certainty. The future is open-ended. But I am confident that whatever the new equilibrium or security architecture or geopolitical balance that eventually emerges, India will be part of it. In March this year, President Clinton made a historic visit to India, signalling the beginning of a new era in India-US relations that some have described as a nascent strategic partnership. The Indian President recently visited China. India has strong traditional ties with Russia that surely some day will re-emerge as a significant player on the Asian stage. Through its

economic reforms and its vast pool of talent, India is also playing an increasingly important role at the frontiers of the new global economy in the software and IT fields. Therefore, from any perspective, India's strategic importance cannot be overlooked. India's strategic engagement with Southeast Asia will evolve as the broader political and strategic context in which South and Southeast Asia are embedded also evolves.

5 Singapore welcomes these developments. Our bilateral ties with India are excellent. Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong visited India for the third time in January this year. Trade and investment links between our countries are strong and growing strongly. We have long-standing traditional, cultural and personal contacts. We are honoured to welcome Minister Jaswant Singh to Singapore and we are pleased that he has consented to share his views on "India and ASEAN : Security Paradigm for AD 2000" with us.

6 Minister Jaswant Singh needs little introduction. He has had a very distinguished career with wide ranging experience at Cabinet level in many areas ranging from Finance to Foreign Affairs. Minister Jaswant Singh also has a military background, having been educated in the National Defence Academy and the Indian Military Academy. There is no better qualified person to educate us on how India fits into the evolving strategic landscape in our region.

7 Ladies and Gentlemen, without further ado, it gives me great pleasure to invite Minister Jaswant Singh to deliver his address.

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