

Towards A New Asia

A Report of the
Commission for A New Asia

This report is dedicated to the memory of Saburo Okita, an inspirational member of the Commission For A New Asia, who believed, as we do, in the need for an Asian Renaissance

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Preface

On December 19, 1992, a group of Asians met in Kuala Lumpur and decided to establish what they called the "Commission for a New Asia". They came from virtually every corner of this vast continent, from virtually every direction of the ideological compass, from virtually every religious belief and from the widest range of career backgrounds.

The result, after four meetings and one year of surprisingly easy effort, is this Report entitled "Towards a New Asia". Some have called it a 2020 Vision for Asia, a roadmap to a better Asian future, or even a manifesto for an Asian Renaissance. There is need for a quieter, more Asian, humility.

We of the Commission have a sense of calm confidence for we believe that our modest intellectual efforts do connect with the realities of this moment in time and with the times yet to come.

Ideas have power where they flow with the tide of objective forces. Our ideas for an Asian Renaissance **do** flow with the tide of Asian resurgence that has already begun. There **will** be the return of history — to the times when Asia was the cradle of human civilisation.

We hope that in some small way, our work will contribute to this return of history — and to the rise of a New Asia.

DATO' DR NOORDIN SOPIEE
Convenor
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13th January, 1994

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Chapter One

Premises and principles

Asia is big. In terms of land area, it is one third of the planet. In terms of population, it is half of the world.

It can be no surprise therefore that it is also the most complex of the continents. In the 44 million square kilometres — between the Arctic north and the tropical south, between the eastern Pacific Rim stretching from the Russian Far East to Indonesia and its western boundaries stretching from the Ural mountains to the Arabian Peninsula — are more than 2.5 billion people of different ethnic origins, religions and cultures; at different stages of political, economic, technological and social development.

The continent now accounts for 25% of global exports, 22% of global imports and 33% of global international reserves. And it is by far the fastest growing. In the 1980s, East Asia grew by 7.8% and South Asia by 5.2% — compared with 3.1% for the OECD countries, 1.6% for Latin America and 2.1% for sub-Saharan Africa. If we grow at 5 to 6 % over the coming generation from our GDP base of \$5 trillion in 1990, our total GDP would stand at between \$21 trillion and \$28 trillion in the year 2020. If our enormous synergies can be collectively harnessed, there is little doubt that Asia will become the economic centre of the 21st century.

The purpose of this first report of the Commission for a New Asia is to articulate a vision for a NEW ASIA over the next generation that is relevant and meaningful for most, if not all, of