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'Malaysia losing halal edge'

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'NO FOLLOW THROUGH': Country has allowed other nations to take over, says DPM

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MALAYSIANS are good at initiating things but do not follow through, causing other countries to step in and take the lead, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said yesterday.

Referring to the halal industry, in which Malaysia had a head start, he said other countries were starting to take over the leading role.

"We are the prime movers of the industry. We had a head start during (former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's) time.

"We are good at producing products. Unfortunately, we allowed others to catch up. Some have even taken over the vital role we played," he said.

Zahid said this in his keynote address at the Halal Cosmetics and Personal Care Products Industry forum here yesterday. The function was also attended by Abdullah.

Zahid announced that Malaysia had made a significant breakthrough in developing palm oil-based technologies, where a sig-



Deputy Prime Minister and Malaysia Halal Council chairman Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi taking a look at halal beauty products at the Halal Cosmetics and Personal Care Products Industry forum in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. To his right is former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Pic by Aizuddin Saad

nificant portion of animal-based oils could be substituted with palm oil products.

He also announced his new role as chairman of the Malaysia Halal Council, set up recently to replace the Cabinet Committee on the Halal Industry.

As the new chairman, Zahid said he hoped to get support from all players, including the private sector, to take the industry forward.

"Let us work as one. Let us work as the leading country in the industry. The government wants to

see the halal industry promoting not only products, but also services," he said, adding that the council would ensure halal matters were coordinated to achieve the desired worldwide impact.

"We have to take a leading role in the industry. All ministries and agencies have to be well coordinated to achieve the desired goals."

Zahid said halal products were much sought after all over the world, recording an increase in exports from RM1.3 billion in 2010 to

RM2.3 billion in 2014, representing an average annual hike of 20 per cent.

"There are 128 halal-certified companies nationwide. The industry is also regulated by the National Pharmaceutical Controls Bureau and Islamic Affairs Department," he added.

Worldwide, the halal industry was worth US\$2.3 trillion (RM9.06 trillion) yearly, as non-Muslim countries were also discovering the benefits of the products, Zahid said.