

DRAFT KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

&

MINISTER OF WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

AT THE NETWORKING RECEPTION DINNER

**FOR ASEAN-JAPAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS' LINKAGE PROGRAMME
(AJWELP)**

ASEAN-JAPAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS' LINKAGE PROGRAMME (AJWELP)

Date: 29/01/2019

Venue: LE MÉRIDIEN KUALA LUMPUR

Yang Berhormat Datuk Seri Mohd Redzuan Md Yusof
Minister of Entrepreneur Development;

Yang Berhormat YB Datuk Wira Dr. Mohd Hatta Ramli

Deputy Minister of Entrepreneur Development;

Mr. Masataka Fujita

Honourable Secretary General ASEAN-Japan Centre;

Yang Berusaha Puan Wan Suraya Wan Radzi

Secretary General Ministry of Entrepreneur Development;

Yang Berusaha Encik Noor Azmi Mat Said

Chief Executive Officer SME Corp. Malaysia;

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners,

Distinguished Guests,

Members of the media,

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and Good Evening to everyone present tonight.

It gives me great pleasure to warmly welcome all of you on behalf of the Government and people of Malaysia to the networking reception of the ASEAN-Japan Women Entrepreneurs' Linkage Programme (AJWELP).

I am honoured to be here tonight to celebrate all the strong women entrepreneurs who are participants and mentors from all over the ASEAN region.

It is wonderful to be in the presence of such an esteemed group of people at this auspicious event.

At the outset, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the government of Japan through the ASEANJapan Centre (AJC) which has generously supported and coordinated this annual programme.

I believe through AJWELP, there will be greater success in empowering women within ASEAN as this programme is already in its third consecutive year of implementation and has been able to generate more interest and participation.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. SMEs are the backbone of each economy, and for ASEAN, they account for between 95 and 99% of all enterprises, and generate between 51 and 97% of employment in many ASEAN Member States (AMS).
2. The contribution of SMEs to GDP is between 23 to 58% , providing job opportunities of between 51% and 97% and contributing to exports ranging from 10 to 30%.
3. Of this figure, there is an estimated 61.3 million women entrepreneurs who own and operate businesses, which account for 9.8 % of the total ASEAN population.
4. Ensuring that women have equal access to education, employment and entrepreneurship is critical to forge stronger, more sustainable and inclusive growth.
5. The full participation of women in the labour market boosts productivity and drives innovation.

6. Data from the OECD report on “Strengthening Women Entrepreneurship in ASEAN” indicates that women’s participation in the ASEAN labour market can further be strengthened with greater access to jobs of quality.

7. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) has recently begun to increase its focus on supporting women entrepreneurship, in particular within the context of the ASEAN Strategic Action Plan for SME Development 2016 – 2025 (SAPSMED).

8. In ASEAN, the cooperation on SME development began way back in 1995, where fostering SME development became one of the priority areas with respect to policy focus and resources under the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

9. With the representation of ASEAN SME agencies, the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (ACCMSME) was established to formulate policies, programmes and activities on SME development.

10. This committee serves as a consultative and coordination forum to ensure the development of SMEs under the on-going process of ASEAN integration.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. Furthermore, ACCMSME serves as a platform to advance women’s economic empowerment in trade, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

12. It is aligned with the Strategic Action Plan for SME Development (SAPSMED) for 2016-2025.

13. Among the strategic goals under SAPSMED is, in particular, under Strategic Goal E – To Promote Entrepreneurship and Human Capital Development.

14. The desired outcome is for human capital development for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to be enhanced, especially for women and youth.

15. In achieving these goals, ACCMSME works closely with various international partners.

16. Among one of its longstanding strategic partners is Japan.

17. AJWELP is one of the many programmes that the ACCMSME ASEANJapan Centre (AJC) has put in place to benefit the SMEs and entrepreneurs of this region.

18. It is notable that women and their contribution towards the development of economies in countries are significant, be it at the national or international front.

19. Globally, 37% of business establishments are owned by women.

20. In Malaysia, 1 out of 5 (20.3%) are womenowned.

21. The recent Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Women's Report (2016) reported that an estimated 163 million women were starting or running new businesses in 74 economies around the world.

22. In addition, it was estimated that 111 million were running established businesses.

23. Women entrepreneurs provide incomes for their families, employment for their communities, and produce products and services that bring new value to the world around them.

24. In fact, the First Muslim Woman, Saidatina Khadijah R.A (Radeyallāhu 'Anha), was a successful and esteemed business woman at a time in history where society was male-dominated and dangerous.

25. This shows the close relationship between Islam and entrepreneurship and how even then, women could thrive and prosper in legal and proper businesses.

26. Research shows that women will be the key factor in future changes and growth around the world.

27. By 2020 women will control about \$28 trillion (RM115.8 trillion) of global consumer spending while 90 million additional women will enter the global workforce in the next two years.

28. I had the opportunity to meet Nobel Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus recently.

29. Known as the “father of microcredit”, Muhammad Yunus observed that women borrowers almost always spent their money in ways that help their families over time.

30. He observed that when women received small loans, they did not squander their money on snacks or luxuries as men did.

31. Muhammad Yunus also observed that women have a better track record when it comes to repayment as well.

32. So it is always better to lend to women.

33. That is also why during the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women (AMMW) in Vietnam in October last year, I suggested the establishment of an ASEAN Bank for women to help develop entrepreneurial skills and empower female entrepreneurs.

Distinguished members of the audience,

34. In Malaysia, women owned businesses constitute 20.6% (186,930) of total SMEs in Malaysia (907,065).

35. This is significantly lower than their male counterparts and of this figure, the majority (97.2%) are in the services sector.

36. Recognising the importance of enhancing women entrepreneurship, Malaysia has implemented a number of Governmentled initiatives in this regard.

37. In 2018, there were ten (10) women entrepreneurship programmes implemented with an expenditure amounting to RM2.3 billion which benefitted 364,052 SME recipients.

38. Through these programmes, assistance was provided in terms of intensive training in entrepreneurship, exporting programmes, and financial assistance for women entrepreneurs.

39. Malaysia's SME Bank launched MySMELady last October, a fund crafted specially for women entrepreneurs.

40. With MySMELady, those who are eligible can apply for financing up to RM1 million with minimum collateral.

41. Initiatives such as these and collaboration programmes like AJWELP are one of the many programmes that make it possible for women entrepreneurs to support one another.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

42. I was made to understand that this AJWELP programme comprised a comprehensive four-day capacity building workshop developed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for the promotion of entrepreneurship among women and micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) to facilitate sustainable development and inclusive growth.

43. Apart from that, the participants were also given the opportunity to learn from the experiences of successful women entrepreneurs from the ASEAN region through a sharing session with these Mentors earlier this morning.

44. As part of enhancing the confidence and motivation of these women entrepreneurs, I was told the 10 AJWELP finalists presented their business plans to the mentors, supporting companies and stakeholders during a business presentation event.

45. I was informed that there has been a lot of interest in developing these business further within the region and external markets.

46. I am also very pleased to note that this programme enlisted the expertise of four very experienced distinguished Mentors from around the region, namely:

Ms. Lin Kobayashi, School Founder and Chair of the Board, UWC ISAK Japan, Japan

Ms. Anna Teo, Group CEO, Hernan Corporation Sdn. Bhd, Malaysia

Ms. Cindy Chaw Khin Khin, Group CEO, Myanmar Computer Co., Ltd, Myanmar

Ms . Pacita Juan, Founder, Earth Life Store Supply Inc. (DBA ECHOstore), the Philippines

47. I was made to understand that Ms Anna Teo, our Mentor from Malaysia had undergone tremendous challenges to reach where she is now.

48. Incorporated in 1996, Hernan Corporation is a leading exporter of Malaysian food and frozen durian products.

49. Over the years, it has grown by leaps and bounds with its export business spreading to Australia, New Zealand, China, Hong Kong, France, Holland and the United States.

50. Last year alone, Hernan Corporation managed to garner sales of up to RM42 million.

51. This is a good example of how women-owned startups can go global.

52. Thank you once again to these excellent women entrepreneurs for being part of this programme.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

53. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development, its SME development agency, SME Corp. Malaysia as well as the ASEAN-Japan Centre in ensuring the success of Malaysia hosting the AJWELP.

54. I would also like to thank the agencies, associations and chambers of commerce and many supporting companies who are here with us

today, for without their generous contribution and support, this programme would not be what it is today.

55. It is too long for me to list all the supporting companies but I would like for each and every one of you to know that your contribution to this programme is highly appreciated and valued.

56. AJWELP is a great example of a strong public-private partnership collaboration.

57. I implore the private sectors to play a more active role in enhancing entrepreneurship and SME development in this country by working closely with the Government through more projects such as this.

CLOSING

Distinguished members of the audience,

58. I shall not make you wait any longer to enjoy the sumptuous dinner spread before you.

59. Thank you all for accepting our invitation and being with us this evening.

60. To all our international guests, I wish all of you a memorable and pleasant stay here in Kuala Lumpur.

61. I hope that you will be able to take some time off to enjoy our capital city, experience the mouthwatering cuisine and enjoy the diversity of cultures on display from religious houses of worship to shopping at Masjid Jamek, Little India and China Town (Petaling Street).

62. As we fondly say, “To Know Malaysia, Is to Love Malaysia”.

63. Finally, I wish all of you a pleasant and enjoyable evening.

Thank you and terima kasih.

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