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Venue: PUTRA WORLD TRADE CENTRE KUALA LUMPUR
Date : 11-06-2004
Title: OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF SMI ONE-STOP
SOLUTION 2004 EXHIBITION & CONFERENCE AND
ENTERPRISE ASIA-EKSPO KEUSAHAWANAN NASIONAL
(EKNA) 2004

YBhg. Dato' Seri Abdul Rahman Maidin, President of Dewan
Perniagaan Melayu Malaysia,

YB. Dato' Chua Jui Meng, Organising Chairman, SMI One-Stop
Solution 2004,

YBhg. Datuk Md. Ramly Mohamad, Chairman of Organising
Committee, Enterprise Asia and EKNA 2004,

YBhg. Datuk Haji Ahmad bin Ithnin, Chairman of Protemp
Group,

Mr. Looi Teong Chye, President of SMI Association Malaysia,

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to congratulate the organisers,
Dewan Perniagaan Melayu Malaysia (DPMM) and SMI Association
Malaysia for their initiative in organizing their two trade
events, EKNA 2004 and SMI One-Stop Solution 2004.

Through SMI One-Stop Solution and EKNA 2004, we witness the
first-ever co-operation between two organizations that have
a significant representation of small-and medium-sized
enterprises in this country. These two trade shows have
attracted more than 200 exhibitors and over 200 trade
delegates, and with 20,000 trade visitors expected, this
will be one of the largest and most prominent trade events
in Malaysia.

The efforts of Dewan Perniagaan Melayu Malaysia and SMI
Association Malaysia must be lauded. Your initiative and
commitment in ensuring that SMEs and local entrepreneurs
are given adequate support to compete globally, be it
financially, technologically or in areas of expertise,
should be emulated and encouraged.

Apart from providing an effective platform for the business community to network and promote their products and services, EKNA and SMI One-Stop Solution have also brought together many industries under one roof for the first time. Indeed, from finance to manufacturing to service industries gathered here today, you have literally created a one-stop total business solutions centre right in the heart of Kuala Lumpur.

In addition to enhancing local networking, I have been informed that this event has attracted a large number of foreign trade delegates from China, Thailand, Vietnam, the Middle East, South America and South Africa. To our friends from overseas, I bid you a warm welcome to Malaysia. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a pleasant and fruitful stay in Kuala Lumpur. I hope that our trade shows will help you to realise your business plans and enable you to build lasting bridges with industry partners here.

Malaysia's rich cultural heritage has also given us an added advantage particularly when building business ties with other countries around Asia. For example, our Muslim community has helped us to establish strong and growing ties with the Middle East, while Malaysian Chinese have led the way into the vast China market. With the strategic tie-up of SMI One-Stop Solution and EKNA 2004, we see the convergence of two major business communities that can mutually benefit one another. Malaysian Chinese can now enter the Middle Eastern market while our Bumiputra businesses can enhance their presence in China by partnering with fellow Malaysians.

This synergy presents opportunities and challenges for our SMEs and entrepreneurs. On the one hand, globalisation has opened doors of opportunities for us. Cross-border investment and international joint-ventures are taking place at a rapid pace. Companies are beginning to view the world as their marketplace, and this opportunity is certainly seized by many. For example, as many as 30 MoUs were signed during our Prime Minister's visit to China last month. And I believe the number will increase as we continue to enhance diplomatic relations with our closest friends and partners in Asia.

In going beyond our borders, Malaysian companies are faced with the challenge to ensure that the quality of our products and services can meet international requirements. In order to do this, we must instill an export culture among our SMEs. Instead of depending on the domestic market, or being suppliers to multinational corporations and local conglomerates, SMEs must be willing to equip themselves with marketing information, knowledge about business conditions in other countries as well as familiarity with export requirements.

In addition, our workforce needs to be adequately equipped with relevant skills to compete on a global platform. For example, SMIs may not be equipped with the latest manufacturing practices like Total Quality Management, Material Requirement Planning (MRP), Enterprise Resource Planning and other management techniques, all of which are vital to a company's competitiveness, productivity and growth. Therefore, a platform is needed to weave together viable solutions that can allow our SMEs to grow, and the quality of products, services and manpower to be enhanced significantly in order to stay competitive globally.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The government of Malaysia acknowledges that our vibrant pool of SMIs is the engine behind our country's economic growth. Our development programmes as well as funds allocation are indications of our continued support for the growth of SMIs and SMEs. For example, in the package of new strategies announced in May of last year (2003), the government moved to increase financial support for SMIs and SMEs by making available RM600 million and RM400 million for the SMI fund and the New Entrepreneurs fund respectively. In 2003, the allocations for SME Special Funds under Bank Negara Malaysia were increased by RM 2 billion in addition to SMIDEC's (The Small and Medium Industries Development Corporation) various offers of financial assistance to SMIs in the form of grants, loans and incentives.

Therefore this effort by DPMM and the SMI Association Malaysia is consistent with the Government's commitment to strengthen our small- and medium-sized industries in the context of developing a broad-based, resilient and

internationally competitive industrial sector. And the fruits of our labour can certainly be seen today. With the gathering of so many vibrant and dynamic SMEs here today, I am assured that we are doing a good job. With more than 20 banks showcasing their products and services during these three days, I am sure SMEs will be pleased with their presence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to witness this first ever tie-up between two reputed organizations that serve to further the interests of the SMI community. I am also pleased to see such a vibrant and dynamic business grouping, and to witness the Malaysian 'muhibbah' spirit displayed through these two trade events. The harmonious co-operation and collaboration that transcend religion, race and culture is the key to sustained economic growth in Malaysia. By working together, we can fully utilise our respective strengths to benefit one another. I laud your efforts, and hope goodwill and harmony among the business community today will permeate to every fibre of our society, and will reassure foreign investors of our country's political and economic stability.

The arduous task of achieving the Vision 2020 of a fully industrialised and developed nation can be overcome with hard work, dedication and co-operation. I urge our SMEs and entrepreneurs to fully embrace these challenges and adopt a positive outlook of the immense global opportunities available to us.

On that note, I would like to wish every success to all those participating in EKNA 2004 and SMI One-Stop Solution 2004

Thank you.