

SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
SEMPENA PELANCARAN KEMPEN PENAWARAN SUKAN ASIA 2006
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Terlebih dahulu, saya ingin mengucapkan terima kasih kepada Kementerian Belia Dan Sukan serta Jawatankuasa Induk Penawaran Sukan Asia 2006 kerana sudi menjemput saya merasmikan upacara yang penuh makna dan bersejarah ini.

2. Saya difahamkan bahawa upacara pagi ini adalah upacara empat dalam satu, ataupun four-in-one, iaitu Pelancaran Logo Sukan Asia, Maskot Sukan Asia, Simbol "Malaysia Boleh", dan, Berjalan Untuk Negara. Cara sebegini bolehlah dianggap satu amalan yang sesuai dipraktikkan kerana dapat menjimatkan perbelanjaan sungguhpun ekonomi negara semakin pulih.

Excellencies, ladies & gentlemen

3. We are gathered here today to witness the launch of Malaysia's bid to offer itself as the host nation for the 2006 Asian Games. The Asian Games are the largest gathering of athletes and sportsmen in Asia and participating nations use this as a benchmark for the Olympics which are held two years later.

4. It is no mean task, therefore, to organise such a massive world class event. But we are confident that we can do it. The resounding success of the Commonwealth Games in 1998 was a watershed in Malaysian sporting history. It showed to the world that Malaysia was capable of organising such a major event. It was this success that gave us the added confidence of not only first attempting to host the Asian Games, but, eventually, the 2008 Olympics as well.

Ladies & gentlemen

5. The Commonwealth Games were held almost a year ago but they remain as firmly embedded memories in the hearts of all sports loving Malaysians.

Allow me to indulge in my own memories for just a while. I remember when we first mooted the idea of hosting the Commonwealth Games in 1989. At that time, many thought it was an elusive dream. Dreams do not become reality, some cynics suggested.

6. But to us, in Malaysia, we have learnt that if there is a will, we can make our dreams come true. And so for nine years, our sports officials, the ordinary Malaysian, NGOs and the government worked hard to ensure that our country was first selected as host against strong bids from other countries. And then, we had to work hard to ensure that the games were successful.

7. Many of us here will remember the Commonwealth run we held throughout the country where tens of thousands of Malaysians from all walks of life turned out to carry the torch and show their support.

8. And I, for one, will never forget how the Malaysian people showed their patriotism, their love for sports, and their support for all involved in organising the

Commonwealth Games, by turning out in record numbers, not only at the opening and closing ceremonies, but also during the run of the games.

As a Malaysian, my heart swells with pride when I recall the events leading up to the hosting of the games and the stellar performance of Malaysian sportsmen and audience during the games itself. If there were any skeptics left after that event, I believe that they, too, had to admit to themselves that truly, Malaysia Boleh.

Ladies & gentlemen

9. In the last decade, Malaysia boleh has become a rallying cry for us to endeavour for success in all that we set our mind to doing, be it in sports or in Computer Technology or in other areas.

10. But having a slogan alone is not enough. Malaysia boleh must be backed by commitment from all Malaysians and a will to ensure that we will succeed. Not many Malaysians would have dreamed in the early 1980s that we could do a lot of the things we have since done, including hosting the second largest gathering of sportsmen after the Olympics. But we did it.

11. Pardon me if i sound a little too enthusiastic. But for fear of being accused of blowing our own horn, let me say that for a young nation like ours, it has not been easy to get our foot in into areas which have for the better part of this century been dominated by the developed world.

12. Even during our bid for the Commonwealth Games, we were unfortunately accused of resorting to underhand tactics to secure votes. Stereotype allegations were hurled at us. But it is a credit to our sports officials that eventually, earlier this year, the truth prevailed when it was made known that top officials in international bodies used economic and political pressure to swing votes towards another country in the bid to host another international sporting event. It was ironic that we were vindicated by the same media which reviled us in our bid to host the Commonwealth Games.

13. As we have seen in recent years, unsavoury elements have crept into sports and there is definitely an urgent need to review such practices which mar the sanctity of sports.

14. In the world cup and other major international games, there is an award for fair play. It is a mockery of the principles of sportsmanship if those deciding on fair play themselves indulge in unfair and strongarm tactics.

Ladies & gentlemen

15. Malaysia has over the last two decades pursued a programme of growth in all fields. Sports is an important part of the Malaysian agenda to become a developed nation by the year 2020.

16. The Malaysian government has, therefore, pursued aggressively the building up of sports infrastructure to ensure there is balanced growth. The economic growth has also allowed us to pursue actively excellence in sports and this we have done by hiring world class athletes and sportsmen to coach and train our own sportsmen.

17. While Malaysia is still a fledgling sporting nation, we are far ahead of what we were ten years ago. While we have always excelled in badminton, we see today Malaysians who are world class squash players. Our sportsmen are also better able to compete confidently in other sports as seen by the big medal haul in the Commonwealth Games.

18. But this is just the beginning for us. The journey ahead for our sportsmen to become leaders on the world stage is long and arduous. My only advice is that we must have the confidence that we can do it and we have to work very hard to make it. Dreams alone will not help us. But let us use our dreams to motivate us to greater heights.

Ladies & gentlemen

19. The Commonwealth Games involved 70 countries. The Asian Games will involve 43 countries. However, there will be more officials and sportsmen involved in the Asian Games and there are more sporting events than in the Commonwealth Games.

20. The organisers will be handling between 30 to 35 sporting events which involve more than 10,000 athletes and officials. This means that the logistics and facilities involved will be much larger. We will treat this as another challenge. God willing, with the spirit of Malaysia boleh burning within us, we will be able to host another successful games if we are chosen as hosts.

21. I believe that with our experience and with the availability of world class facilities such as at the sports complex in Bukit Jalil and Shah Alam, we can do it.

22. It is a pleasure for me to see in the audience the many familiar faces of ambassadors and high commissioners from Asian countries.

23. Thank you for being here. As you are aware, Malaysia is anxious to bid for the 15th Asian Games. The Government and Olympic Council of Malaysia have already transmitted our offer to the Olympic council of Asia earlier this year.

24. Our offer is based on the experience, infrastructure and our collective will to ensure the games success. On behalf of the people of Malaysia, I would be obliged if your excellencies could convey our desire to host the 15th Asian Games to your respective governments and Olympic committees. Give us the opportunity and we promise we will try our best to make this one of the most memorable games in its history.

Para hadirin yang dihormati

25. Kerajaan sedar bahawa penganjuran sukan peringkat antarabangsa di negara kita dapat menyumbang kepada pembangunan negara. Dengan yang demikian, persatuan- persatuan sukan dan syarikat-syarikat swasta digalakkan menyumbang dan menawarkan diri menjadi tuan rumah kepada sukan masing masing.

26. Kita patut berbangga bahawa didalam satu dua tahun kebelakangan ini, Malaysia telah menjadi tuan rumah kepada beberapa kejohanan peringkat antarabangsa seperti kejohanan kelayakkan hoki piala dunia, kejohanan remaja bolasepak piala dunia dan Sukom. Kita sedia maklum bahawa sehingga akhir tahun ini, kita akan menganjur beberapa kejohanan peringkat antarabangsa seperti World Cup Golf dan

Perlumbaan Kereta Formula One. Pada tahun hadapan, saya difahamkan, kita akan menganjur Pertandingan Ping Pong, Piala Thomas dan beberapa sukan lagi. Kejohanan-kejohanan ini senentiasa mendapat liputan media antarabangsa yang sekaligus akan memperkenalkan negara kita lagi kepada dunia.

27. Kerajaan menganggap sukan sama pentingnya dengan program sosial lain dan inilah diantara sebabnya sukan telah berkembang dengan begitu pesat kebelakangan ini. Penglibatan kita tidak hanya terhad kepada acara-acara permainan sahaja tetapi meliputi pengurusan, pengeluaran alat-alat sukan, media sukan, pemasaran, pengurusan venue-venue sukan, pengelolaan temasya sukan antarabangsa, sports tourism, sports science dan sebagainya.

28. Semuanya ini memerlukan profesionalisme dikalangan mereka yang terlibat. Dengan hakikat ini, maka kerajaan sentiasa menyokong usaha-usaha pembangunan sukan seperti peruntukan latihan atlit, peruntukan pembinaan infrastruktur sukan, penubuhan institut sukan negara, penubuhan sekolah sukan dan sebagainya. Jika kita terus berusaha dengan gigih, insya allah, sukan negara akan maju.

Para hadirin yang dihormati,

29. Izinkan saya sekali lagi mengucapkan tahniah kepada Jawatankuasa Induk Penawaran Sukan Asia 2006 dan Kementerian Belia Dan Sukan yang telah pun memulakan kerja-kerja Penawaran Sukan Asia 2006 dengan memperkenalkan logo dan maskot sukan tersebut. Semoga kita dapat menyakinkan Olympic Council of Asia bahawa kita serius dengan tawaran kita menjadi tuan rumah Sukan Asia 2006. Majulah sukan untuk negara.

30. Sekian, dengan rasminya, saya melancarkan Kempen Penawaran Sukan Asia 2006.

Terima kasih.