

**UCAPAN**  
**YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI**  
**SEMPENA MAJLIS PENUTUP KONVENSYEN AGEX '99**  
**DI PUSAT DAGANGAN DUNIA PUTRA**  
**28 OGOS 1999**

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Terlebih dahulu, saya merakamkan penghargaan saya kepada pihak penganjur kerana telah menjemput saya untuk merasmikan majlis penutup Konvensyen AGEX atau Asia Agricultural Exposition And Convention '99.

2. Saya bersyukur kehadiran Allah s.w.t kerana dengan izin-nya konvensyen ini telah diadakan dengan sempurna. Saya berharap bahawa para peserta dan pengunjung ke konvensyen ini telah mendapat manfaat dari segi mendapat idea-idea baru untuk meningkatkan lagi pendapatan serta pengeluaran bahan makanan dan komoditi.

3. Insyaallah, dengan adanya konvensyen seperti ini, sektor pertanian dapat ditingkatkan lagi prestasinya supaya dapat menjana pendapatan tukaran asing serta menjadi pemangkin kepada pembangunan negara.

Ladies and gentlemen,

4. The agricultural sector played a very important role in Malaysia's formative years. During the war on the Korean peninsula, rubber prices for example, reached phenomenal heights and many interesting stories were spun out of the wealth of rubber smallholders and estate owners.

5. Those of you involved in the rubber industry may remember tales of how rubber tappers bought refrigerators which were used to store clothes because they had no electricity. The cycle ended eventually but in the late 1970s, we heard how those who benefitted from the cocoa and palm oil price boom were buying new Mercedes Benzs and how people were converting land used for other purposes to the planting of cocoa and oil palm.

6. While we revel in stories of rags-to-riches, it must also be acknowledged that the revenue derived from these commodities fueled growth in other sectors and allowed the country's planners to build up infrastructure and divert funds to other areas to diversify the economy.

7. Today, manufacturing, tourism and trading contribute significantly to the country's economy. But the agricultural sector has not diminished in its importance with commodities such as palm oil and cocoa being the major sources of revenue for the country.

8. But unlike the early years when traditional methods brought in modest and in cases, even meagre returns, today, Malaysia has made significant progress in its agricultural and rural development programmes especially in the plantation sector. Aggressive and sustained research and development has enabled Malaysia to be recognised as a reference point for successful estate management of crops such as cocoa and oil palm.

9. Although there is a glut in worldwide rubber prices, the government has introduced a two-tier pricing system to ensure that rubber smallholders woes are

alleviated. With other steps being taken by the government to stabilise rubber prices, we hope that soon, this sector will again be able to sustain and provide decent returns for those involved.

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. The economic crisis has changed scenarios and priorities of many national economies, especially in Southeast Asia. In Malaysia, for example, the significance of the agricultural sector, in particular oil palm and forest products, in sustaining the nation's economy have become more apparent.

11. However, to maintain the competitive edge, more R&D efforts and new frontiers in agriculture need to be explored. Asia with its vast human resources and cultural heritage can emerge as a force to be reckoned with if new and modern technologies including I.T. and machinery are integrated in the agricultural modernization programme.

12. Just as we have progressed from the traditional and burn methods of farming to more sustaining modern ways today, we have to constantly keep abreast of developments and at the same time, spearhead developments through our own R&D, to keep production up and costs down.

13. Should we not try to maintain the competitive edge by pursuing modernity, we will be rendered ineffective on the global stage and this will have a negative effect on the overall economy and our policy of ensuring food security and income generation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

14. The recently launched Malaysia Third National Agricultural Policy (NAP-3) has set strategic directions for agricultural and forestry development up to the year 2010. The policy aims to promote growth in the agricultural sector through proper supportive measures as well as ensuring a conducive environment. The nap-3 strategy will continue to emphasise productivity and market-driven growth.

15. In production, the competition for limited land will compel the new breed of knowledge-based agriculturists to "produce more from less". Sound knowledge in bio-technology, precision agriculture, organic recycling and new fertilisers, agroforestry techniques, and alternative market strategies are some of the pre-requisites to a successful, commercial and sustainable agriculture. Estatisation and crop zoning based on soil suitability, micro-climatic factors, accessibility to markets are also important criteria to be considered.

16. In the respect, allow me to share an example of how Malaysia managed to uplift the lot of coconut cultivators. Not too long ago, popular folklore dictated that coconuts were bad for the libido. Coconuts were left to grow on their own and a young coconut fetched prices of between 10 to 25 sen.

17. Our former Agriculture Minister decided to dismiss the notion that coconut water was bad for the libido by telling the country that he had seven children and that he drank coconut water regularly. Coupled with aggressive marketing through organising international coconut tree climbing competitions and making the crop available widely in weekly agro-markets (Pasar Tani), the Minister managed to create popular demand.

18. Today, most five-star hotels serve coconut water at 10 ringgit per coconut and farmers are earnestly cultivating the crop as a cash product. This is a simple analogy but it is intended to show that if proper strategies are employed, then the commercial viability of a product increases.

19. In an industrialising nation like Malaysia, a viable agricultural economy requires a detachment from sole dependency on production agriculture to a greater dependence on the value-added side of agricultural products.

20. This is well exemplified in the palm oil industry with its vitamin e, palm diesel, high carotene palm oil and many other value-added products. Similar potentials need to be derived from other food and non- traditional crops such as herbs and bio-pharmaceuticals, such as Malaysia's answer to Viagra, the Tongkat Ali, which can become multi-billion ringgit industries globally.

21. The WTO and various attendant agreements have spun a global momentum towards an open and liberal trading system in goods and services. Agricultural products have to be competitive in the world market and production techniques will be subjected to scrutiny under ISO 9000 and 14000 to ensure they meet established standards. New and updated technologies must be employed by knowledgeable and innovative practitioners to constantly maintain the competitive edge of their products.

Ladies and gentlemen,

22. I am confident that your three days of deliberation at AGEX '99 have discussed many issues involving the agriculture sector. You will have come up with new ideas and new solutions in your continuing efforts to improve production and standards in the agricultural sector.

23. It is my hope that with efforts such as these, we can continue to ensure greater output to meet the needs of our world's ever-growing population.

24. Sekali lagi, saya ingin mengucapkan terima kasih kepada pihak penganjur, iaitu Universiti Putra Malaysia dan Happening Event Sdn. Bhd., Kerana menjemput saya. Dengan ini, saya, dengan rasminya, menutup konvensyen ini.

Wabillahi tawfik walhidayah wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh

Terima kasih.