

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF 15TH INDUSTRY TRADE FAIR MALAYSIA
(ITM 2001), AT KUALA LUMPUR
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Terlebih dahulu, saya ingin mengucapkan terima kasih kepada Malaysian Exhibition Services Sdn Bhd kerana sudi menjemput saya untuk merasmikan Pembukaan "Industry Trade fair Malaysia 2001", ataupun ITM2001.

2. Pameran hari ini adalah yang ke lima belas dalam siri ITM* sejak dimulakan, ianya telah berjaya meningkatkan prestasi dan telah berjaya menjadi pameran yang ulung untuk industri pengeluaran dengan penyertaan lebih 500 syarikat dari 30 buah negara.

3. Saya ingin menugucapkan tahniah kepada Malaysian Exhibition Services Sdn Bhd atas usaha untuk menganjurkan pameran ini. Saya difahamkan pameran ini telah menjadi satu-satunya daya penarikan kepada syarikat tempatan dan juga antarabangsa.

4. I am told that the ITM series was the first trade show in the country to be awarded international recognition in 1990 by the union des foires internationales, or ufi, an international certification body for trade exhibitions. such recognition serves to underline the importance and contribution of the ITM series to the continued development and growth of the local manufacturing industry.

5. Such exhibitions are not only a catalyst for entrepreneurs to tap opportunities in the manufacturing sectors but they are also an ideal medium offering solutions to industry needs. They also reinforce the government's initiatives to encourage local businessmen to adapt the latest technologies for the acceleration of our k-economy objectives.

6. The Malaysian economy, like most regional economies, is once again having its resilience tested by external economic factors. These include the softening of the us economy and the rapid pace of globalisation.

7. Without doubt, these external pressures impact on the performance of our national economy, especially the export-oriented manufacturing sectors. It is necessary therefore for both the public and private sectors to work in closer collaboration to find appropriate solutions to these issues.

8. The government has always been receptive to the views of the private sector and gives serious consideration to strategic solutions that can help boost the nation's economic growth and global competitiveness.

9. By working together with the private sector, i am confident we will not only overcome challenges facing the economy, but we should, by working hard, become more competitive on the global playing field.

10. On its part, the government will continue to make every effort to adopt prudent fiscal and financial policies as outlined in the eighth Malaysia plan and opp3 to ensure sustainable growth, and to enable all Malaysians enjoy a better quality of life,

11. The manufacturing sector will continue to remain the country's main growth engine. In the last two years, this sector grew by between 13.5 per cent in 1999 to 21 per cent in the year 2000. Indeed, the manufacturing sector will spearhead the country's industrial development in facing the many challenges of globalisation.

12. To sustain growth in this sector, the government recognises the need to promote investments, especially in high technology and value-added industries, that strengthen international competitiveness of the sector, as well as generate strong linkages with the domestic economy.

13. Under the 8th Malaysia plan, the manufacturing sector is targeted to grow by 8.9 per cent annually, contributing 35.8 per cent to the share of gdp by 2005. Exports of manufactured products are projected to also grow by 8.9 per cent each year, accounting for 89 per cent of the nation's export earnings by 2005.

14. Taking into account the changes in global and regional developments, among the policy thrusts under the 8th Malaysia plan will be the focus on developing resilient small and medium-scale enterprises (SMES).

15. SMES play an important role in supporting national industrialisation efforts by forging linkages across the manufacturing sector. The adverse impact of the economic slowdown on SMES and the globalisation of the world economy underscore the need for SMES to become more resilient and competitive.

16. Towards this end, the government will continue to provide support in strengthening SMES as a means of encouraging domestic investment. The small and medium industry development plan (SMIDP) will chart the future development of the SMES to provide the critical linkages in the development of a broad-based, globally competitive industrial sector.

17. The implementation of the SMIDP will require the concerted efforts of the SMES themselves, with the government providing a conducive environment. In this respect, the government will provide financial assistance, infrastructure facilities and support services.

18. The government will also continue to provide industrial sites at affordable prices to SMES. During the 8 MP, an allocation of RM131.9 million has been allocated as soft loans to state economic development corporations to develop SME industrial parks.

19. Emphasis will also be given to developing the entrepreneurial skills of SMES so as to build up their capabilities and competitiveness. In this regard, more aggressive promotional efforts will be undertaken to encourage SMES to participate in training programmes. In order to create greater access to markets for SMES, the widespread adoption of e-commerce applications will be promoted.

20. I am confident that exhibitions such as ITM 2001, are an ideal platform for local manufacturers to keep pace with the latest industry and global market developments and to complement the government's initiatives to promote and develop stronger SMES to further enhance Malaysia's industrial development.

21. I would like to wish mes and all participants every success in your endeavours. It is now my pleasure to officially open ITM 2001.

Thank you