

**SPEECH BY
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AT THE KUALA LUMPUR 21 CONVENTION AND EXPOSITION
AT HOTEL NIKKO, KUALA LUMPUR
12 FEBRUARY 2001**

Allow me to begin by thanking the Kuala Lumpur City Hall and ASLI for inviting me this morning to open the Kuala Lumpur 21 Convention and Exposition. We have just recently celebrated our 27th Hari Wilayah or City Day during which Putrajaya, Malaysia new administrative capital, was declared a Federal Territory.

As we prepare to move ahead this century with a modern, verdent and fully wired seat of government administration we must also focus on the continued development of Kuala Lumpur, the nation's capital. I hope that over the next two days you will be able to discuss and formulate key strategies for Kuala Lumpur to grow from strength to strength and cement its reputation as a global city.

Ladies and gentlemen, Cities all over the world are undergoing rapid changes. Many of the key financial, business, political and cultural centres are becoming more cosmopolitan than ever. These global cities have everything to offer the global citizen from fine dining to the theatre, headquarters of international banks and multinationals to street side art galleries, and efficient service to modern infrastructure.

Cities in which people work, play and rest are constantly growing, either organically or in a structured manner to attract new settlers and to keep existing residents comfortable and content. Cities in developing countries like Kuala Lumpur must be able to offer quality living and services that match the best of what is being offered in global cities if it is going to successfully meet the demands of a more affluent urban society and cater for the requirements of expatriates and the international jet set.

I believe that Kuala Lumpur has a strong base to build on to become a world class city. The city already boasts modern infrastructure, cosmopolitan residents, a vibrant cultural base and an impressive skyline. Together with the satellite cities of Putrajaya and Cyberjaya, central Kuala Lumpur sits on the Multimedia Super Corridor - an information technology backbone that will house hubs of innovation and creativity driving the country's knowledge economy. Kuala Lumpur has also largely remained lush and green, indicative of efforts towards sustainable growth.

Yet, there is much that needs to be done before Kuala Lumpur can be said to be a truly global city of the 21st century. Infrastructure needs continued upgrading and coordination. The current condition of public transport is testament to the fact that we have not done enough to promote a user friendly public transport system that can successfully eliminate the inconvenience of having to travel through traffic jams.

There needs to be more work on the culture of service and maintenance in Kuala Lumpur. More than anything else, this is where Malaysia illustrates that it is still in the third world and not in the first. Take service. Why is it that even within the private sector, where workers are paid better and supposedly have higher morale, we still find ourselves being attended to by an unsmiling, uncooperative, inefficient worker with zero initiative. This suggests that the training that is being offered in the

city's service industry is sorely below par. It is a national shame that, in terms of service in the city, Kuala Lumpur is unable to impress like other cities in the region that possess a more resourceful, friendly and efficient work force.

As for maintenance, this seems to be a recurring complaint about Kuala Lumpur in particular and Malaysia in general. When I was in Japan last year, a Malaysian student asked me why it was that Malaysia was capable of building the most modern and architecturally superior buildings, but yet fail to maintain these buildings to world class standards. He pointed out that although many of the buildings in Tokyo were old, they were maintained well and thus continued to provide working and living space for Tokyo's residence. In particular, he referred to the Narita Airport in Tokyo which to his mind had more of a shine to it than the new KLIA which has lost its shine. The problem here also applies to the dismal service culture. The mentality of Malaysians. Unless Malaysians change their mentality to become more aware of the need to serve people better and improve the upkeep of buildings we will forever be a third world country with first world infrastructure.

The development of Kuala Lumpur into the 21st century must be accompanied by a rise in civic consciousness. The same mentality that results in poor service and shoddy maintenance, also pays little heed to the need for less pollution and congestion. Residents of Kuala Lumpur who litter indiscriminately are still unaware - despite great publicity - that their thoughtless act of just throwing away rubbish in drains and on street curbs can lead to flooding in the city.

Urban development must also be approached with greater care in the future. Whereas previously Kuala Lumpur welcomed the rush of development and construction, today management of the city should guard against another reckless build up of property assets - as was evident before the financial crisis. It must also be vigilant against contractors who promise speed but not quality. Too often Kuala Lumpur residents and workers have had to suffer living and working in places that are unfit to be occupied after a few months.

Furthermore, the authorities will have to be stricter in enforcing rules and laws. Errant developers that fail to deliver must be punished and high quality standards must be set for the construction of homes and offices. There must be a greater insistence by the public sector that private developers and companies must take on the job of being good corporate citizens by ensuring that they are committed to the sustainable development of a Kuala Lumpur that is consistent with preserving the environment and promoting a living space that is clean and healthy.

We must also look at ways in which we can preserve our heritage. There are many historical buildings and areas that need to be properly preserved. There is no systematic attempt to conserve and rehabilitate buildings in the old city centre. It is indeed depressing to see old shop houses that can be conserved torn down and replaced by a generic, modern office block. We must do more in the area of promoting the preservation of heritage sites.

Ladies and gentlemen, We cannot merely focus on Kuala Lumpur for the expatriates, the affluent and the professional middle class. Kuala Lumpur is also home to recent migrants from rural areas, factory workers and others with lower income. In fact, the problem of urban poverty is serious. The government is committed to handling this issue effectively from dealing with the problem of housing to improved employment conditions.

I sincerely hope that the Kuala Lumpur City Hall will focus greater attention on the need to uplift the lives of this group by bringing adequate development to the areas where they live. We must tackle low-cost housing in a big and speedy way to solve squatter problems and to move people in into decent homes.

Although social ills are also prevalent in the middle class, it acutely affects groups that are less well off and underprivileged. We do not want to see the rise of inner city ghettos in Kuala Lumpur. It is for this reason that I stress the importance of concentrating to bridge the gap between this group and the well off in Kuala Lumpur. If we to successfully develop this city holistically, we must empower the underprivileged groups by providing them with the necessary infrastructure and amenities to live a quality life.

In all of these challenges and endeavours that I have outlined, the government cannot do it alone in isolation. I am a firm believer that a tri-sectoral approach involving government, private sector and community groups must be employed effectively if we are serious in developing Kuala Lumpur into a world class city.

The city hall should know that the public now demand greater transparency and accountability. They want authorities that are honest, efficient and friendly. The City Hall must not be opaque, inefficient and overly bureaucratic. I hope the Datuk Bandar will be able to continue to implement measures that will make Kuala Lumpur City Hall more accessible, responsive and user friendly to the citizens of Kuala Lumpur.

The private sector are also encouraged to play their role in the sustainable development of Kuala Lumpur. Projects that are proposed and undertaken should not damage the existing environment but enhance the natural habitat of the area. I hope the private sector can act as good corporate citizens of Kuala Lumpur by ensuring that development is undertaken with responsibility.

Community groups will also have to engaged for key "bottom up" projects of empowering residents to cooperate within their neighbourhood on matters ranging from littering to providing authorities suggestions on public transport, public amenities and feedback on social problems prevalent in their area.

I believe that with a concerted effort by these groups, Kuala Lumpur's future development will be more balanced and can meet the expectations of its growing and diverse population. It is my hope that we can work together to build a Kuala Lumpur that is truly world class - home to global citizens as well as home to ordinary Malaysians, a place where all are able to enjoy quality living. With this it gives me great pleasure that I declare open the Kuala Lumpur 21 Convention and Exposition.

Thank you.