

**SPEECH BY  
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI  
AT THE OPENING OF THE STAR MEDIA HUB  
AT BUKIT JELUTONG  
15 JANUARY 2002**

-----

Terlebih dahulu, saya mengambil kesempatan ini untuk mengucapkan terima kasih kepada pihak star publications yang telah sudi menjemput saya untuk hadir di majlis yang amat bermakna ini. saya juga ingin mengucapkan syabas dan tahniah kepada pihak the Star kerana telah berjaya mendirikan sebuah pusat media yang serba indah dan canggih ini, sesuai sebagai mercu tanda kemajuan akhbar tersebut di Malaysia sekian lama.

2. It is an honour and privilege for me to be here this afternoon at the official opening of Star Media Hub at Bukit Jelutong. This is Star Publications' newest printing plant and, as I have learnt, is a most modern and advanced version of its type in the world. Hence, this occasion gives great pride not only to Star Publications, but also to the industry and nation. Star Media Hub demonstrates Star Publications' determination to set itself as a media organisation of excellence. It also signifies the organisation's confidence in the country's economy, by investing several hundred million ringgit in the project.

3. The capacity of media organisations like Star Publications to keep pace with the latest advances in technology and consumer trends is vital. In the last ten years or so, the development of satellite, cable and computer-related technologies has revolutionised all aspects of the media industry. Smarter consumers have become more demanding about better and faster news, even personalising the information that they receive. These developments have created many new ways of collecting, communicating, and commercialising news and information. Without doubt, these new technologies and trends have opened up new possibilities and opportunities. But they also raise a host of other concerns.

4. For example, and Most strikingly, these new technologies have introduced a global dimension to news gathering and distribution. Media reporting and dissemination today display a reach and a speed virtually unhindered by space and frontiers. Transnational television or newspapers that have head offices in major Western capitals are now able to instantaneously cover "live" events or crises as they unfold thousands of miles away in distant parts of the world. Their bureau journalists release news and film footage, sometimes well before their local media counterparts. Even as a crisis develops, the reports are flashed around the world wherever there is a satellite receiver dish. Such is the tremendous power of the fourth estate that Very few nations are able to stay out of the spotlight of the international media. Fewer still are the countries able to insulate themselves from this vast inflow of unregulated information. Certainly, The global reach of media has a profound impact on all societies everywhere, and this importance is set to grow with time .

5. For the industry in Malaysia, the expanding global media opens up a wider range of international news choices. It has also led to a proliferation of alternative online news of local or overseas origin. This, I believe, is a major challenge to our media organisations. International media threatens to be an additional option or an alternative to what is published by the local newspapers. Today, the performance of local media is judged against those of international news organisations. How fast an

unfolding local event is covered by Malaysian newspapers will be critically compared against the foreign media. How accurate, balanced, and fair the reporting and analysis of the local press will all count in the competition with the overseas media. The discerning Malaysian will increasingly turn to international reports or to alternative news sources if the Malaysian media is judged to be slow in delivery or, more importantly, poor in credibility. Thus, while speed is of the essence in this industry, quality and accuracy must always be paramount.

6. I understand that The star today is the leading English-language newspaper in the country. The progress of Star Publications has been achieved through careful management on the back of the country's dynamic economic and social growth. the expansion of Education over the last thirty years has produced a larger and more sophisticated reading public. Meanwhile, strong Economic and business development has created a demand for more refined news analysis and more corporate information.

7. I hope that through its pages The Star will continue to keep readers well informed of happenings within and outside the country. This task of informing and educating society is a major responsibility of the press. Indeed, the role of media will be further enhanced as we move into the information age, one in which information and knowledge become decisive factors in economic growth. New knowledge will drive the Information revolution. It is a Revolution where methods of production as well as types of products and services are transformed. Information and communications technology (I.C.T.) will spearhead this new economy of Knowledge-based industries and Knowledge- based services.

8. In an industry that is inextricably linked to the flow of information, media organisations are well placed to help lead the country into the Information Age, and to transform Malaysia into a Knowledge-based economy. I understand that Star Publications has started the journey by transforming itself from conventional print journalism into a multi-media organisation. This evolution of media is unstoppable, indeed it should be hastened. The different media channels will serve the different customer segments for different needs. But the overall idea is to move our society along the learning curve, up to higher and higher levels of knowledge and wisdom. Newspapers such as The Star must continue through its pages and its regular technology pullouts to help readers and all Malaysians make that essential leap into the Information Age.

9. Newspapers belong in both the public and private spheres. `Public' because every citizen has a legitimate right to news and information that affects his or her life. `Private' because such news and information is brought right into the home, and educates and shapes the thinking of members of society. What is published in the newspapers profoundly influences the mindset of millions of readers. For many in this country, what they read in the papers will influence their decisions on business and commerce, on their health and education, on where they go on holiday, or even on their political choice.

10. It is therefore absolutely necessary for the print media to be based on the principles of integrity, honesty and fairness. These bedrock principles cannot be compromised to gain material advantage, or simply forgotten when it becomes convenient to do so. News reports and analyses must be done in a mature and accountable manner. Important issues should not be trivialised, nor should those which are unsubstantiated be sensationalised. Events should be covered well and

accurately. Messages put forth should be placed in their proper context, and the essence of what is said should be captured carefully. Needless to say, a paper that is credible, balanced, and reliable is integral to the functioning of a vibrant and orderly society.

11. Beyond informing and educating, the media should also lead public debate and opinion. The media should allow proper `space' for discourse and discussions. Newspapers must be able to articulate the views and interests of its readers. It must do this so that the opinions of ordinary citizens, drawn from diverse social and political backgrounds, can be represented. Newspapers must offer a forum within which issues of interest can be raised and discussed, and one within which the hopes and aspirations of all Malaysians can be put across.

12. I know that over the years, The Star has tried to play its part in this area. I note the space and the attention that The Star gives to matters on the environment, on education, on social development, and on health. Newspapers must continue to pursue these important subjects, and they must alert their readers to new developments as and when they arise. In all these, The Star, as with the other newspapers, must offer in its editorial coverage a perspective that is relevant and appropriate to the Malaysian context. While we welcome differing views from outside Malaysia, it is our journalists here who understand the situation better and who are well placed to interpret what is really happening on the ground.

13. I call upon all newspapers to continue their active role in nation-building. Few institutions command the attention and following as newspapers do. Consider this. Each day, Early in the morning, millions of Malaysians reach for their daily papers to read the latest news and to search for information. Without realising it, they are united in that one activity at that moment in time. Such is the power and influence that newspapers have, because millions of Malaysians are held captive over the same contents every morning.

14. Malaysia is still a young nation. Newspapers have a unique opportunity, through what it publishes, to help weld together our multi-ethnic society. The pages in our newspapers recall our history and our heritage, while speaking of future challenges and of days to come. Working together, we can achieve much if we continue to build on the trust, tolerance and mutual respect within our society; to continue evolving with a common identity, but always enriched by our diversity. Indeed, through these efforts we strengthen the bonds of being citizens of our nation.

15. The official opening of Star Media Hub is a major milestone for Star Publications. I am hopeful that Star Media Hub will bring technical improvements and a smoother workflow to the organisation. These, in turn, should be reflected in enhanced quality of contents. I wish the star well in the years to come. On that note, it is my honour to officially declare open Star Media Hub.

Thank you.