

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
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Saya ingin merakamkan ucapan terima kasih kepada UMW Toyota Motor kerana mengundang saya ke Malam Gala bersempena dengan Sambutan Ulang Tahun Ke-20 syarikat ini.

2. Saya difahamkan Malam Gala ini diadakan dengan tujuan untuk merakamkan penghargaan kepada Kerajaan, rakan niaga dan pelanggan serta rakyat Malaysia yang pada umumnya telah memberi sokongan padu kepada UMW Toyota. Sokongan ini telah membolehkan syarikat ini berjaya berdiri teguh selama 20 tahun.

3. Sehubungan itu, saya amat gembira sekali melihat UMW Toyota telah menempa nama sebagai sebuah syarikat automotif yang cemerlang dalam dua dekad ini. Saya percaya syarikat ini berkebolehan untuk terus mencapai kejayaan di masa depan. Saya juga berharap UMW Toyota akan kekal berdaya saing dengan syarikat-syarikat automotif antarabangsa.

4. It is gratifying to see that UMW Toyota, a home- grown business entity with active participation of Toyota Motor Corporation from Japan and Permodalan Nasional Berhad of Malaysia, has grown from strength to strength over the last 20 years.

5. I am made to understand that Toyota has been the No.1 make in the non-National market since 1990 and last year, Toyota carved the niche of being the No.1 position in the passenger vehicle segment as well.

6. It is difficult to reach the number one spot in any industry and even harder to remain there. This is especially true now, where companies are subjected to myriad pressures that may not have existed in the past. Trade liberalisation opens up markets and forces corporations to not only operate domestically but also be able to withstand competition from beyond national borders. The rate of technological development makes products outdated and obsolete even quicker, forcing producers to innovate more quickly. The global geopolitical situation is also unstable, with countries seemingly eager to resort to military action, the consequences of which can have an adverse impact on the entire world.

7. All companies, from the largest corporations to the small and medium sized operators must fortify themselves to face the challenges of the marketplace. Companies that do not will struggle to survive. The harsh reality is that in today's business world, survival of the fittest is the order of the day.

8. In this context, it is imperative for local companies and business entities to develop a cutting edge in order to thrive and prosper. I believe that the best way to deal with these challenges is to adopt a mindset that embraces excellence and rejects mediocrity. We want our companies to be synonymous with quality, reliability and consistency.

9. Companies should invest heavily in human resources to ensure its people are inculcated with the right knowledge and attitudes. They must invest heavily in technology with an emphasis on research and development in order to innovate and enhance the quality of their products. They must be attuned to the needs and wants of consumers. They must continue to look for new opportunities and adopt new directions. Within their own organisations, there must be continuous improvements in business processes to enable quick and flexible response to the changing environment.

10. Once the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) comes into effect, business entities must be sufficiently resilient to remain relevant. On its part, the Government will continue implement measures and support efforts to enhance the competitiveness of the Malaysian automotive industry. Whilst it is the stance of the Government to see that the playing field is level and the operating environment for businesses remains conducive, there can be no easy way or short cut to success. Companies must accelerate their initiatives to raise their competitiveness, or risk being marginalised.

11. I am told that ever since Toyota started selling its vehicles in our country in 1955, Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC) has been sharing and transferring automotive engineering technology and expertise to its partners. This long-standing relationship is indicative of the close and productive ties between the respective business communities in Malaysia and Japan. I hope TMC will continue to accelerate the advancement of technology transfer, not only to UMW Toyota in Malaysia, but also to assist the Malaysian Government in our concerted efforts to further develop the automotive industry in Malaysia.

12. Similarly, I hope to see more social and environmental contributions from TMC in the country. It is important for corporate citizens like UMW Toyota to mobilise its resources by instilling awareness in society on the importance of preserving and maintaining our natural resources. The Toyota Eco Youth environment management program that has been undertaken with schools in Malaysia over the past several years is an example of this and I urge such good work to be continued in the future.

13. Finally, I would like to once again thank UMW Toyota for inviting me to commemorate the company's 20th anniversary. Congratulations on reaching this important milestone. On that note, I am pleased to officially launch the 20th Anniversary of UMW Toyota.

Thank you.