

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE MALAYSIA INTERNATIONAL
HALAL SHOWCASE (MIHAS) 2004 'WINDOW TO THE GLOBAL HALAL
NETWORK' MALAYSIA INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION & CONVENTION
CENTRE (MIECC) AT MINES RESORT CITY
16 AUGUST 2004**

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YOUR EXCELLENCIES

HONOURED PARTICIPANTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMAN

1. ASSALAMUALAIKUM WARAHMATULLAHI WABARAKATUH AND VERY GOOD AFTERNOON I BID TO ALL OF YOU. LET ME FIRST THANK THE ISLAMIC DAKWAH FOUNDATION OF MALAYSIA (YADIM), AND HALAL MALAYSIA FOR INVITING ME TO LAUNCH THE INTERNATIONAL MALAYSIA HALAL SHOWCASE (MIHAS) 2004 – 'WINDOW TO THE HALAL GLOBAL NETWORK'.

2. THE GOAL OF ESTABLISHING MALAYSIA AS A GLOBAL HALAL HUB HAS BEEN THE AIM OF THIS GOVERNMENT FOR SEVERAL YEARS. THIS EVENT, MIHAS 2004, IS AN IMPORTANT AND SIGNIFICANT STEP TOWARDS MAKING THIS VISION A REALITY. I AM PLEASED TO NOTE, THAT IN ITS INAUGURAL YEAR, MIHAS – WHILE ALSO ENCOMPASSING INTERNATIONAL HALAL-CERTIFIED FINANCIAL AND INVESTMENT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES, PHARMACEUTICAL GOODS, AND A WIDE RANGE OF OTHER MUSLIMS CONSUMABLES – IS THIS YEAR'S LARGEST FOOD AND BEVERAGE TRADE FAIR IN THE COUNTRY. IN ADDITION, IT IS ALREADY THE LARGEST INTEGRATED HALAL TRADE EXPO TO BE HELD ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD. MY HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS TO THE ORGANISERS AND I HOPE THAT THE STRENGTH MALAYSIA COMMANDS IN THE GLOBAL HALAL INDUSTRY IS SOMETHING THAT ALL OF US CAN BENEFIT FROM, NOT JUST FOR MALAYSIANS BUT ANYONE INTERESTED IN THE BURGEONING GLOBAL HALAL MARKET THE WORLD OVER.

3. HALAL PRODUCE IS FAST GAINING WORLDWIDE RECOGNITION, AND WE KNOW THAT THIS IS NOT MERELY BECAUSE THE MUSLIM UMMAH IS GROWING IN NUMBER, BUT PERHAPS MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, BECAUSE HALAL IS BEING RECOGNISED AS A NEW BENCHMARK FOR SAFETY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE. HALAL FOOD IS HIGHLY SOUGHT AFTER, NOT JUST BY THE 1.5 BILLION MUSLIMS AROUND THE WORLD, BUT BY PEOPLE FROM DIVERSE RACES AND RELIGIONS WHO ARE LOOKING FOR CLEAN AND PURE FOOD. IN THE U.K. FOR EXAMPLE, WHERE THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 3 MILLION MUSLIMS, DOUBLE THAT NUMBER BUY HALAL MEAT, AND I AM CONFIDENT THAT SIMILAR STATISTICS REFLECT SUCH DEMAND IN MANY OTHER COUNTRIES.

4. IN MALAYSIA, THE VAST MAJORITY OF OUR POPULATION CONSUMES HALAL FOOD AND OTHER PRODUCTS AND SERVICES ON A DAILY BASIS. MOST CURRENT ESTIMATES OF THE SIZE OF THE HALAL FOOD MARKET WORLDWIDE ARE BASED ON MUSLIM POPULATIONS IN DIFFERENT PLACES, BUT I BELIEVE THAT THE ACTUAL MARKET SIZE AND POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH OF HALAL FOOD PRODUCTS ARE CONSIDERABLY UNDERESTIMATED. THIS PHENOMENON IS ALSO TRUE OF OTHER ISLAMIC PRODUCTS AND SERVICES. IN THE FINANCIAL SERVICES SECTOR, FOR EXAMPLE, IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT MANY OF THE CUSTOMERS OF ISLAMIC FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS ARE NOT MUSLIM. IN SOME BANKS, ABOUT 80% OF THE COMMERCIAL TRADE CUSTOMERS, ARE NON-MUSLIM.

5. I AM PLEASED TO SEE THAT MIHAS IS MORE THAN JUST A SHOWCASE OF MALAYSIA'S HALAL FOOD SECTOR. MANY OTHER IMPORTANT AREAS OF THE HALAL MARKET, INCLUDING NEW GROWTH INDUSTRIES FOR THE MARKET SUCH AS INSURANCE, TRAVEL, PUBLISHING, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND MULTIMEDIA ARE ALL ON DISPLAY HERE. I ALSO NOTE, THAT IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE EXPO, AN INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC FASHION SHOW HAS BEEN ORGANISED. I SEE THIS AS A DEMONSTRATION OF THE WONDERFUL RANGE AND BREADTH OF THE HALAL MARKET POTENTIAL, AND CERTAINLY, IT IS YET ANOTHER FIRST FOR MALAYSIA, WHO HAS CONSISTENTLY DEMONSTRATED ITS EDGE IN EXPLORING FRESH AND BOLD NEW AREAS FOR THE MUSLIM UMMAH, BE IT IN ISLAMIC FINANCE OR 'HAUTE COUTURE'. LADIES AND GENTLEMAN, I TRULY BELIEVE THAT WE ARE WITNESSING THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW GLOBAL MARKET FORCE.

6. ANOTHER ASPECT OF MIHAS WHICH I HOPE ALL OF YOU TODAY WILL TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF IS THE TRADE MATCHING SERVICE. THE ORGANISERS HAVE INFORMED ME THAT BASIC INFORMATION OF ALL MIHAS EXHIBITORS ARE ALREADY ON THE DATABASE WITH NEW PARTICIPANTS BEING ADDED EVERY DAY. I STRONGLY ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO EXPLOIT THE BENEFITS OF SUCH A SERVICE THAT THE TOOLS OF TECHNOLOGY NOW ALLOW, WHICH I HOPE WILL DEVELOP INTO A FULL-FLEDGED MARKET WITH THE POTENTIAL TO HERALD A NEW ERA IN ISLAMIC TRADE – AN ERA NOT SEEN SINCE THE GREAT DAYS WHEN ISLAMIC TRADE ROUTES USED TO STRETCH ACROSS THE WORLD, TRAVERSING EAST AND WEST.

7. SO GREAT WERE THE MARKETS THEN, THAT TRADERS USED TO TRAVEL FOR HUNDREDS OF MILES OVER WEEKS AND MONTHS JUST TO CLAIM A PART OF IT. THESE CELEBRATED MARKETS WERE FREE, AND I UNDERSTAND THAT MIHAS INTENDS TO KEEP THIS CONTINUOUS ONLINE MARKETPLACE MUCH THE SAME. THIS TRADE AND BUSINESS MATCHING SITE WILL FACILITATE THE MARKETING AND SOURCING OF HALAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES FOR MANUFACTURERS, BUYERS, BOTH BIG AND SMALL TO MEDIUM INDUSTRIES, AND INVESTORS – THINK OF THE POSSIBILITIES AND THE SHEER NUMBERS, NOW THAT A MERE CLICK OF A BUTTON CAN ENABLE US TO PARTICIPATE IN A VIRTUAL MARKET SPANNING THE ENTIRE GLOBE. THROUGH THIS SERVICE ALONE, I FULLY EXPECT MIHAS TO HOLD ON TO ITS CURRENT POSITION AS THE WORLD’S LARGEST TRADE EXPO, ON AND OFF-LINE.

8. AT MIHAS, MALAYSIA’S BEST HALAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES, MANY OF WHICH ARE WORLD CLASS, WILL BE ON DISPLAY. I HOPE THAT THIS HOME GROWN EXPO WILL ENCOURAGE MORE MALAYSIAN BUSINESSES TO DEVELOP THEIR GOODS, AND CLAIM A SPOT ALONGSIDE THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY OR ARE BECOMING INTERNATIONALLY-RENOWNED GLOBAL BRANDS. AN EXPO LIKE MIHAS ENSURES THAT MALAYSIA KEEPS ITS LEADING EDGE AND REPUTATION IN THE HALAL INDUSTRY WORLD-WIDE AND I AM CONFIDENT THAT WE WILL ALL PROFIT FROM SUCH AN EFFORT, WHICH STANDS IN LINE WITH A TRADE AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY THAT THE GOVERNMENT FULLY SUPPORTS. THE HALAL HUB IS SOMETHING WHICH WE WANT TO SEE TAKING SHAPE, AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN CONTINUOUSLY TAKING STEPS TOWARDS THIS END. I ASK ALL HALAL INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS TO WORK WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN THIS ENDEAVOUR, AND I WILL ENSURE THE FULL COOPERATION OF THE VARIOUS MINISTRIES AND DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED.

9. MALAYSIA IS NOT WASTING ITS ADVANTAGE AS A SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPING MUSLIM COUNTRY. IT WILL, INSYA-ALLAH BE MOVING BEYOND BECOMING A HALAL FOOD HUB AND IS ALREADY FURTHER DEVELOPING A SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENT ALONGSIDE THE VARIOUS INCENTIVES ALREADY IN PLACE TO ENHANCE THE PRODUCTIVITY OF OUR CROSS-CUTTING HALAL INDUSTRIES. TODAY WE WILL MARK THE UNVEILING OF A NEW STANDARD FOR MALAYSIA – A MUSLIM STANDARD FOR THE WORLD. AFTER SEVERAL YEARS OF DEDICATED HARD WORK, OUR NATIONAL BODY OF STANDARDISATION AND QUALITY, SIRIM, HAS COMPLETED THE “MALAYSIAN STANDARD MS 1500, GENERAL GUIDELINES ON THE PRODUCTION, PREPARATION, HANDLING AND STORAGE OF HALAL FOODS”, WHICH INCLUDES COMPLIANCE WITH G.M.P. GOOD MANUFACTURING PRACTICES AND G.H.P. GOOD HYGIENE PRACTICES. THIS NEW STANDARD WILL FURTHER STRENGTHEN MALAYSIAN HALAL CERTIFICATION – ALREADY THE LONGEST ESTABLISHED AND MOST WIDELY RECOGNISED REGISTERED HALAL LOGO IN THE WORLD.

10. MALAYSIA WILL CONTINUE TO GRADUALLY RAISE ITS STANDARDS FOR HALAL IN LINE WITH CURRENT TRENDS PARTICULARLY IN THE GLOBAL FOOD MARKET. HALAL HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BECOME A STANDARD ASSOCIATED NOT ONLY WITH PRODUCT QUALITY BUT ALSO WITH BEST PRACTISES THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PRODUCTION CHAIN. IN ITS TRUE SENSE, THE CONCEPT OF HALAL HAS ALWAYS EMBRACED WHAT IS GOOD, THUS FOR MUSLIMS, FAIR AND ETHICAL BUSINESS

PRACTICES ARE NOT SOMETHING NEW. AT A TIME WHEN CONSUMERS HAVE BEEN SHAKEN BY NEWS OF DISEASES AFFECTING BASIC FOOD THAT WE EAT, IT IS INCUMBENT ON ALL OF US TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENSURE THAT SUCH HEALTH DISASTERS, OFTEN BORNE OF UNHEALTHY PRACTISES BY GROWERS AND PRODUCERS, NO LONGER OCCUR.

11. HIGHER STANDARDS BASED ON CURRENT RECOGNISED HALAL CERTIFICATION – WITH A HIGH QUALITY ALREADY ACKNOWLEDGED BY INCREASES IN DEMAND EVEN IN PLACES WITH MINORITY MUSLIM POPULATIONS – CAN BE DEVELOPED TO MEET AN EVEN MORE COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF NEEDS TO STAND AMONGST THE BEST. IN FACT, THERE IS NO REASON WHY IT SHOULD NOT BE AMONGST THE BEST, NOT JUST FOR MUSLIMS, BUT FOR ALL. MALAYSIA HAS BEGUN EXPLORING SUCH AN EFFORT, AND WOULD LIKE TO WORK TOGETHER WITH INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS TO FURTHER EXAMINE HOW THIS CAN BE DONE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

12. TODAY IS INDEED A CELEBRATION OF HALAL AND THE DIVERSITY OF THE MUSLIM UMMAH, AND MALAYSIA IS PROUD TO BE PLAYING HOST TO SO MANY PARTICIPATING NATIONS FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE GLOBE. WE ESPECIALLY WELCOME PARTICIPANTS WHO HAVE TRAVELLED FROM AFAR, FROM SOUTH AFRICA, ARGENTINA, BRAZIL AND THE USA, FROM RUSSIA, BELGIUM, THE UNITED KINGDOM AND TURKEY, FROM PAKISTAN, BANGLADESH AND IRAN AS WELL AS OUR NEIGHBOURS FROM INDONESIA, THAILAND, AUSTRALIA AND CHINA. I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT NOT ONLY ARE THERE EXHIBITORS FROM THESE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, BUT INTERESTED TRADE VISITORS HAVE ALSO FLOWN IN FROM AROUND THE WORLD SPECIFICALLY TO ATTEND THE SHOW. MALAYSIA IS INDEED HONOURED TO PLAY HOST AND WE ARE PLEASED BY THE ENCOURAGING NUMBERS REPRESENTING COUNTRIES NOT TRADITIONALLY IDENTIFIED WITH THE MUSLIM WORLD. I TRUST THAT THE ORGANISERS WILL LEVERAGE ON THIS RECOGNITION OF MALAYSIA AS A NATION THAT CAN PROVIDE REAL LEADERSHIP IN THE HALAL MARKETPLACE.

13. ONCE AGAIN, I THANK THE ORGANISERS OF MIHAS 2004 FOR INVITING ME, AND FOR THEIR UNDERTAKING AND HARD WORK. I HOPE TO SEE FURTHER COLLABORATIONS IN THIS EFFORT ESPECIALLY WITH MORE MEMBERS OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE FUTURE. MY GOVERNMENT HAS THROWN IN ITS SUPPORT. WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR, INSYA-ALLAH THIS INITIATIVE CAN BECOME AN IMPORTANT ANNUAL EVENT, THAT ACTS AS A CATALYST FOR GROWTH IN THE GLOBAL HALAL MARKET, BENEFITING NOT ONLY MUSLIMS BUT ALL STAKEHOLDERS. IN THE NAME OF GOD, MOST BENEVOLENT AND MERCIFUL, I OFFICIALLY LAUNCH THE MALAYSIA INTERNATIONAL HALAL SHOWCASE, MIHAS 2004.

THANK YOU.

*This speech does not include off-the-cuff remarks made by the Prime Minister at the function