

SPEECH BY
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AT THE NATIONAL BRANDING & PACKAGING INNOVATION
EXHIBITION & CONFERENCE 2005
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ASSALAMUALAIKUM WARAHMATULLAHI WABARAKATUH DAN SALAM SEJAHTERA

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DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

1. I FOUND THE WALK THROUGH THE LIMKOKWING PACKAGING INNOVATION GALLERY TO BE QUITE INTERESTING. I WAS INTRIGUED BY THE MANY CREATIVE DESIGNS ON DISPLAY AND AM DELIGHTED AT THE TALENT BEING DEVELOPED HERE.

2. I THINK WE MUST FULLY UTILISE AND PROMOTE THIS TALENT TOWARDS ENHANCING THE GLOBAL REACH AND STANDING OF MALAYSIAN PRODUCTS AND SERVICES. ALONG WITH OTHER STRATEGIC ELEMENTS, WE SHOULD FOCUS ON DEVELOPING BRANDING AND PACKAGING AS A NATIONAL PRIORITY IN THE MANUFACTURING AND SERVICES SECTORS.

3. EVEN AT THE LEVEL OF THE NATION – MALAYSIA, AS AN INTERNATIONAL BRAND MUST CONTINUE TO BE NURTURED AND ACTIVELY DEVELOPED. GLOBALLY SPEAKING, BECAUSE COMPETITION AND RESOURCE MOBILITY ARE FAST RISING AS WELL AS BECAUSE THERE IS STILL IGNORANCE ABOUT MALAYSIA, WE HAVE TO GALVANISE BOTH EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL MARKETING OF BRAND "MALAYSIA" SO THAT WE CAN CONSISTENTLY PUNCH ABOVE OUR WEIGHT.

4. AT THE NATIONAL, AS WELL AS AT THE INDIVIDUAL ENTERPRISE LEVEL, THE CHALLENGE IS TO DEVELOP A CLEAR FOCUSED POSITION AND TO BE SPECIFICALLY WELL KNOWN FOR THAT. IN THE CASE OF MALAYSIA, WE HAVE TO ATTRACT AND CONVERT TARGETED GROUPS INCLUDING FOREIGN TOURISTS, EXPORT PURCHASERS AND INVESTORS, HIGHLY SKILLED WORKERS AND SCIENTISTS, STUDENTS AND OTHERS, INTO SATISFIED CUSTOMERS. WE SHOULD BE KNOWN FOR OUR QUALITY AND OUR PERFORMANCE.

5. AT EVERY LEVEL, COMPETITION IS INCREASING, AND BRANDING ALONG WITH PACKAGING ARE INCREASINGLY THE TOOLS WITH WHICH CONTESTS FOR CONSUMERS ARE WON AND LOST. WE MUST FACE THIS REALITY AND THEREBY ENSURE THAT MALAYSIA AND MALAYSIAN BRANDS BECOME GLOBAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT THE WORLD MARKET PREFERS.

6. MALAYSIA TRADES WITH MORE THAN A HUNDRED COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE AND IS TODAY ONE OF THE WORLD'S TOP 20 LARGEST TRADING NATIONS WITH EXPORTS AMOUNTING TO 126.3 BILLION U.S. DOLLARS IN 2004, AN INCREASE OF 20.5 PER CENT FROM THE YEAR BEFORE. OUR TRADE SURPLUS ALSO CONTINUES TO INCREASE, WITH MORE THAN 80 MONTHS OF TRADE SURPLUS CURRENTLY. ADDITIONALLY, THE MALAYSIAN ECONOMY CONTINUES TO STRIDE FORWARD CONFIDENTLY WITH REAL G.D.P. REGISTERING HEALTHY GROWTH OF 5.7 PERCENT IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2005, ON THE BACK OF 7.1 PERCENT GROWTH FOR 2004.

7. THEREFORE, IT IS QUITE TELLING THAT EVEN WITH AN EXPANDING ECONOMY AND A PREMIER POSITION IN GLOBAL TRADE, THERE IS A NEAR TOTAL ABSENCE OF TRULY WORLD CLASS AND INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED MALAYSIAN BRANDS.

8. THIS ABSENCE IS NOT FOR LACK OF CAPABILITY, CAPACITY OR QUALITY. WE KNOW THIS BECAUSE WE ARE A LEADING EXPORTER IN MANY SECTORS WITH MALAYSIAN-MADE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES SOLD AND USED ALL OVER THE WORLD.

9. WHAT WE LACK IS A COMPREHENSIVE APPRECIATION OF THE VALUE-ADD THAT BRANDING AND PACKAGING STRATEGIES CAN BRING TO BUSINESSES, SMALL AND BIG. IN THIS REGARD, WHAT WE ALSO LACK AND WHAT I THINK LIMKOKWING UNIVERSITY COLLEGE AND OTHERS ARE BEGINNING TO DEVELOP IS THE KNOW-HOW REQUIRED TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT SUCCESSFUL BRANDING AND PACKAGING STRATEGIES.

10. BRANDING AND PACKAGING ARE FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES, WHICH LARGE MALAYSIAN COMPANIES AS WELL AS S.M.E.'S MUST SERIOUSLY ADOPT AND INTEGRATE INTO THEIR CURRENT BUSINESS PRACTICES. WE MUST WORK TO DEVELOP THE CAPACITY OF MALAYSIAN ENTERPRISES AND ENABLE THEM TO ROLL OUT PACKAGING AND BRANDING OF THEIR PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT CAN COMPETE AT ALL LEVELS. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FOR S.M.E.'S, AS ABOUT 90 PERCENT OF OUR MANUFACTURING CAPACITY COMES FROM SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES AND INDUSTRIES.

11. BROADER INDUSTRY SPECIFIC INITIATIVES SHOULD ALSO BE PURSUED. AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-BASED INDUSTRIES IS ONE SUCH AREA WHERE MALAYSIA SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ITS RECOGNISED POSITION AS A LEADING WORLD PRODUCER. WE SHOULD DEVELOP MALAYSIA AS A CENTRE OF PROCESSING, PACKAGING, MARKETING AND BRANDING OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS FOR GLOBAL MARKETS. THESE FOUR STAGES IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN ARE FUNDAMENTAL IN ENGENDERING INDUSTRY WIDE EXPANSION AS WELL AS IN OBTAINING INCREASED VALUE FROM AGRICULTURAL AND AGRO-BASED PRODUCTS.

12. WE NEED TO EMPOWER RURAL-BASED ENTERPRISES IN THIS REGARD. TOWARDS THIS END, THERE ARE SEVERAL MEASURES THAT NEED TO BE PUT IN PLACE IN ORDER TO INNOVATE AND EMPOWER RURAL-BASED ENTERPRISES, MOST OF WHOM EXIST AS SMALL PLAYERS CONTENT WITH SERVING THEIR IMMEDIATE LOCALITIES. THESE MEASURES COULD INCLUDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND FINANCING IN PRODUCT INNOVATION, AS WELL AS PACKAGING INNOVATION AND BRAND DEVELOPMENT. FURTHERMORE, OTHER ESSENTIAL AREAS SUCH AS MARKETING, MANAGEMENT, WAREHOUSING AND DISTRIBUTION SERVICES ALSO NEED TO BE GRADUALLY DEVELOPED. THIS EMPOWERMENT WILL HELP TO BRIDGE THE INCOME GAP THROUGH ACTIONS THAT RESULT IN WEALTH CREATION FOR THE RURAL HEARTLAND.

13. IN THIS REGARD, WHAT IS CURRENTLY HAPPENING IN TERENGGANU ARE CERTAINLY STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. I UNDERSTAND THAT T-LEKUR AND T-DAGANG, WHICH ARE TRADITIONAL RURAL INDUSTRIES, ARE NOW READY TO BE MARKETED UNDER THE STATE GOVERNMENT'S FOCUSED ONE DISTRICT ONE PRODUCT STRATEGY. I FULLY ENCOURAGE THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THIS JOINT EFFORT BETWEEN THE TERENGGANU STATE GOVERNMENT AND LIMKOKWING UNIVERSITY COLLEGE WHICH HAS RESULTED IN THE PRELIMINARY VISUALISATION OF THESE TWO BRANDS.

14. INDEED, IN TERMS OF BRANDING, WE MUST REALISE THAT ALL THE EFFORTS OF MANUFACTURERS, SERVICE PROVIDERS, DISTRIBUTORS AND OTHERS, IN AGRICULTURE AS WELL AS IN THE OTHER SECTORS AND ACROSS MALAYSIA AS A WHOLE – ALL THESE EFFORTS CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE BUILDING OF A GLOBAL IMAGE FOR THE COUNTRY. WE MUST ENSURE THAT CONSISTENT MESSAGES REACH TARGET GROUPS. FROM WORD-OF-MOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS TO OFFICIAL BRANDING EVENTS ABROAD, WE MUST TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD QUALITY GLOBAL BRANDS, WHICH WILL IN TURN COMPLEMENT EFFORTS TO BUILD A STRONG AND RESPECTED INTERNATIONAL IMAGE FOR THE COUNTRY.

15. WE SHOULD ALSO PERSUADE THE PEOPLE THAT THEY BENEFIT, DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY, FROM INCREASED MARKETING AND BRANDING EFFORTS, BE THEY AT THE NATIONAL OR AT THE INDIVIDUAL ENTERPRISE LEVEL. THE ADDITIONAL COST AND EXTRA EFFORT IN PURSUING BRANDING AND PACKAGING STRATEGIES IS MORE THAN MADE UP BY THE ADDITIONAL RETURNS DERIVED FROM THESE STRATEGIES. WITH THE COOPERATION, SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING OF MALAYSIANS WORKING IN VARIOUS INDUSTRIES, PEOPLE THE WORLD OVER WILL SEE MALAYSIA AND MALAYSIAN PRODUCTS AND SERVICES AS SOLID BRANDS THAT CHARACTERISE HIGH QUALITY AND VALUE-FOR-MONEY, AND THAT EMBODY THE LARGER SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE, GLORY AND DISTINCTION.

THANK YOU.