

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF BANK NEGARA MALAYSIA LINK
AT BANK NEGARA MALAYSIA, KUALA LUMPUR
25 FEBRUARY 2005**

1. I WOULD LIKE TO THANK BANK NEGARA MALAYSIA FOR INVITING ME TO LAUNCH THE BANK NEGARA MALAYSIA LAMAN INFORMASI, NASIHAT DAN KHIDMAT, OR BANK NEGARA MALAYSIA LINK. THIS IS ANOTHER LANDMARK INITIATIVE FOR BANK NEGARA MALAYSIA AS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS CENTRE DEMONSTRATES THE BANK'S COMMITMENT TO FURTHER ENHANCE ITS SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC. THIS IS ALSO IN LINE WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S CALL TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN MALAYSIA.

2. INDEED, ACHIEVING WORLD CLASS STANDARDS IN THE DELIVERY OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES IS A TOP PRIORITY FOR THE GOVERNMENT. IN TODAY'S GLOBALISED AND INCREASINGLY COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT, MALAYSIA CAN NO LONGER COMPETE ON THE BASIS OF COST ADVANTAGES ALONE. INSTEAD, WE WILL ALSO BE MEASURED ON THE BASIS OF QUALITY – THE QUALITY OF OUR PRODUCTS, THE QUALITY OF OUR SERVICES, AND THE QUALITY OF THE DELIVERY SYSTEMS THAT MAKE AVAILABLE THOSE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES TO THE VARIOUS END-USERS AND STAKEHOLDERS. ENHANCING THE NATION'S COMPETITIVENESS THEREFORE REQUIRES THE COMMITMENT OF BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN SUPERIOR STANDARDS IN PRODUCTION AS WELL AS IN SERVICE DELIVERY.

3. EFFORTS TO RAISE STANDARDS OF SERVICE DELIVERY MUST FUNDAMENTALLY ADDRESS THE BASIC ISSUES AND PROBLEMS THAT CONFRONT CONSUMERS AND BUSINESSMEN. THESE INCLUDE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES, TIMELINESS OF SERVICES PROVIDED, COMPETENCE OF SERVICE PROVIDERS, THE COMPLEXITIES OF HAVING TO DEAL WITH MULTIPLE AGENCIES OR INSTITUTIONS, AS WELL AS THE COST OF SERVICES. HENCE, OUR FOCUS SHOULD BE DIRECTED AT SIMPLIFYING THE SERVICE DELIVERY CHAIN, ACHIEVING A MORE CUSTOMER-DRIVEN APPROACH TO SERVICE, AND BY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES TO OFFER A VARIETY OF WAYS THAT ARE MORE CONVENIENT AND EFFICIENT FOR PEOPLE TO CONDUCT BUSINESS. A STRONG CUSTOMER ORIENTED SERVICE CULTURE NEEDS TO BE CULTIVATED IN ALL ORGANISATIONS.

4. THE GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO THIS PROCESS OF CHANGE AND IMPORTANT PROGRESS IS BEING MADE IN ENHANCING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE, THE LATEST BEING THE ONGOING "KEMPEN BUDI BAHASA DAN NILAI-NILAI MURNI". SUCH INITIATIVES UNDERLINE THE GOVERNMENT'S RESOLVE TO LEAD THE WAY IN IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY, AND IT IS MY HOPE THAT THE PRIVATE SECTOR CAN FOLLOW SUIT. THIS PROCESS OF CHANGE, BE IT IN THE PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SECTOR, WILL NOT BE EASY AND WILL TAKE TIME. HOWEVER, SUCH A PARADIGM SHIFT IS CRUCIAL IF WE ARE TO RISE TO THE CHALLENGE OF INCREASING COMPETITION AND LIBERALISATION.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

5. WITHIN THE FINANCIAL SECTOR, I AM PLEASED TO NOTE THAT SIGNIFICANT MEASURES HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED TO ENABLE THE BANKING AND INSURANCE INDUSTRIES TO RESPOND MORE EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY TO CONSUMER DEMANDS FOR BETTER QUALITY SERVICES. THE MEASURES IMPLEMENTED IN THE FINANCIAL SECTOR HAVE FOSTERED A MORE COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT AND HAVE ENABLED FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS TO LEVERAGE MORE EFFECTIVELY ON TECHNOLOGY, ECONOMIES OF SCALE AND OPERATING SYNERGIES. THIS PROCESS HAS CONTRIBUTED TOWARDS MARKET EFFICIENCIES THAT WILL CONTINUE TO DRIVE DOWN COSTS AND EVOLVE INTO A MORE DIVERSE AND EFFICIENT FINANCIAL SYSTEM THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF CONSUMERS, BUSINESSMEN AND, ULTIMATELY, THE ECONOMY.

6. EFFORTS TO RAISE STANDARDS IN THE DELIVERY OF FINANCIAL SERVICES MUST ALSO INCLUDE INITIATIVES THAT EMPOWER CONSUMERS TO MAKE SOUND AND WELL-INFORMED FINANCIAL DECISIONS. I AM PLEASED TO NOTE THE NUMEROUS CONSUMER EDUCATION AND PROTECTION INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN BY BANK NEGARA MALAYSIA, INCLUDING THAT OF THE BANK NEGARA MALAYSIA LINK, WHICH SERVE TO INCREASE THE LEVEL OF FINANCIAL LITERACY AMONG CONSUMERS. THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT EDUCATION HOLDS THE KEY TO POVERTY ERADICATION AND FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE.

7. FINANCIAL EDUCATION THAT EQUIPS CONSUMERS WITH THE KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED TO CHOOSE FROM DIFFERENT FINANCIAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS WILL INCREASE THE ABILITY OF CONSUMERS TO BETTER MANAGE THEIR PERSONAL FINANCES, AND CONSEQUENTLY IMPROVE THEIR FINANCIAL WELL-BEING. THE GOVERNMENT THEREFORE LOOKS FORWARD TO A FURTHER INCREASE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CONSUMER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES ACROSS THE NATION.

8. LET ME ALSO ADD THAT FINANCIAL EDUCATION SHOULD NOT ONLY BE LIMITED TO THOSE IN THE HIGHER INCOME BRACKETS, BUT SHOULD BE FOR ALL SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY, ESPECIALLY GROUPS SUCH AS BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS AND S.M.E.'S THAT HAVE TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH. CURRENTLY, THERE ARE ABOUT 690,000 S.M.E. ESTABLISHMENTS IN MALAYSIA, WHICH REPRESENT 92 PERCENT OF TOTAL MANUFACTURING ESTABLISHMENTS IN MALAYSIA. THEY CONTRIBUTE ABOUT 30 PERCENT OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT, BUT LESS THAN 10 PERCENT OF G.D.P.. AS SUCH, THERE IS MUCH SCOPE FOR S.M.E.'S TO BE FURTHER DEVELOPED TO ASSUME A GREATER ROLE AS AN ENGINE OF GROWTH IN THE ECONOMY.

9. THE GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF S.M.E.'S. I PERSONALLY CHAIR THE HIGH LEVEL NATIONAL S.M.E. DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, WHOSE TASK IS TO FORMULATE A COMPREHENSIVE AND WELL-COORDINATED FRAMEWORK TO CHART THE STRATEGIC POSITIONING AND FUTURE DIRECTION

FOR S.M.E. DEVELOPMENT. THE COUNCIL WILL DRIVE THE POLICY MEASURES NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THIS, INCLUDING INITIATIVES TO STRENGTHEN THE INFORMATION DATABASE ON S.M.E.'S, ENHANCE ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND IMPROVE ACCESS TO FINANCING. I AM PLEASED TO LEARN THAT THE BANK NEGARA MALAYSIA LINK, WITH THE SUPPORT OF RELEVANT GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, ALSO ACTS AS A ONE STOP CENTRE IN PROVIDING INFORMATION AND ADVISORY SERVICES RELATING TO FINANCING ACCESS TO S.M.E.S AND ENTREPRENEURS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

10. ACHIEVING WORLD-CLASS SERVICE DELIVERY IS A JOINT RESPONSIBILITY OF BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS, INCLUDING THE FINANCIAL SERVICES INDUSTRY. THOSE WHO ARE IN THE BUSINESS OF PROVIDING SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC MUST BE PROFESSIONAL, KNOWLEDGEABLE, APPROACHABLE, TRUSTWORTHY AND FAIR TOWARDS THEIR CUSTOMERS. BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS MUST TAKE A LONGER-TERM VIEW IN THEIR STRATEGIC FOCUS IN ORDER TO BUILD LASTING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS, AND TO ENSURE THAT MALAYSIA IS ABLE TO COMPETE EFFECTIVELY IN THE GLOBAL ARENA. TODAY'S LAUNCH OF THE BANK NEGARA MALAYSIA LINK REPRESENTS THE FINANCIAL SERVICES INDUSTRY'S COMMITMENT TO THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO ENHANCE THE PUBLIC DELIVERY SYSTEM IN MALAYSIA. I AM CONFIDENT THAT OTHER SECTORS WILL ALSO RISE TO THE OCCASION AND DELIVER SUPERIOR CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS. ON THAT NOTE, IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO LAUNCH THE BANK NEGARA MALAYSIA LINK.

THANK YOU.