

**SPEECH BY  
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI  
AT THE WORLD HALAL FORUM GALA DINNER AT HOTEL CROWNE PLAZA  
MUTIARA, KUALA LUMPUR.  
8 MAY 2006**

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BISMILLAHIR RAHMANIR RAHIM

ASSALAMUALAIKUM WARAHMATULLAHI WABARAKATUH AND GOOD EVENING

EXCELLENCIES,

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

1. I AM PLEASED TO BE HERE TONIGHT, TO PERSONALLY WELCOME ALL DELEGATES AND PARTICIPANTS TO THE WORLD HALAL FORUM. AS I LOOK AROUND THIS ROOM, I AM HONOURED THAT MALAYSIA IS PLAYING HOST TO SUCH A DISTINGUISHED GATHERING OF HALAL INDUSTRY LEADERS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE. INDEED, IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THE HALAL MARKET IS A FARM-TO-FORK PHENOMENON. WE CAN RECOGNISE THE TRUTH OF THAT STATEMENT, AS WE SEE TONIGHT REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL PARTS OF THE HALAL VALUE CHAIN JOIN US AT THIS MOST IMPORTANT FORUM.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

2. IT IS NO SECRET THAT MALAYSIA HAS FOR SOME YEARS NOW EXPRESSED ITS ASPIRATION TO BECOME A GLOBAL HUB FOR THE PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF HALAL GOODS AND SERVICES. TO START WITH, MALAYSIA HAS CONTINUED TO DEVELOP ITS CAPABILITIES AND EXPERTISE TO BECOME A MARKET LEADER IN THE FIELD OF ISLAMIC FINANCIAL SERVICES. BASED ON THIS EXPERIENCE, WE SEEK TO EXTEND OUR ROLE FURTHER BY WORKING TOWARDS DEVELOPING GLOBAL STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES WITHIN THE LARGER HALAL INDUSTRY MARKETPLACE.

3. AS THE HALAL MARKET CONTINUES TO GROW IN STRENGTH AND DIVERSITY, THE NEED FOR GLOBALLY ACCEPTED BEST PRACTICES AND STANDARDS FOR AUDITING AND CERTIFICATION OF 'HALAL' BECOME INCREASINGLY APPARENT. THE NEED TO ENSURE THAT BOTH INVESTOR AND CONSUMER INTERESTS ARE PROTECTED REQUIRES ALL STAKEHOLDERS TO WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES THAT WILL ALLOW THE INDUSTRY TO CONTINUE TO GROW STRONGLY.

4. THIS IS A MARKETPLACE THAT HAS ENORMOUS POTENTIAL, WITH PLENTY OF ROOM FOR PARTICIPANTS FROM ALL SECTORS AND FROM ALL COUNTRIES. NONETHELESS, THE NEXT STAGE OF GROWTH OF THE HALAL INDUSTRY WILL REQUIRE A NEW, HIGHER LEVEL OF EFFORT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THE MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS TO ACHIEVE THE DESIRED RESULTS. THIS WILL ALSO REQUIRE A FOCAL POINT FOR THINKING AND DISCUSSION, AND FOR COLLABORATION AND ACTION.

5. IN THIS CASE, WE STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT MALAYSIA CAN PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN FORGING SUCH AN EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AND TO ENCOURAGE GREATER COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE VARIOUS PARTICIPANTS IN THE HALAL INDUSTRY. AS A NATION THAT IS FAST DEVELOPING IN BOTH ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SPHERES, THAT CAN CELEBRATE ITS DIVERSITY OF COMMUNITIES, CULTURES AND RELIGIONS – WITH A MODERATE YET DYNAMIC MUSLIM POPULACE IN THE COUNTRY – WE HAVE SEEN THE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE THAT ‘HALAL’ PLAYS IN OUR SOCIETY, AND BELIEVE THAT WE CAN ASSIST IN EXTENDING THIS ROLE BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL MARKETS TO THE WIDER WORLD. MALAYSIA THEREFORE STANDS READY TO TAKE ON A LEADING POSITION IN DEVELOPING THE GLOBAL HALAL INDUSTRY FURTHER.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

6. THE QUR’ANIC INJUNCTION TO MANKIND TO EAT WHAT IS HALAL AND TAYYIB, OR LAWFUL AND WHOLESOME FROM THE EARTH IS AN AFFIRMATION FOR US THAT HALAL IS A MATTER FOR EVERYONE, NOT JUST FOR MUSLIMS. WHILE THERE IS A STRONG WORLDWIDE FOUNDATION OF 1.6 BILLION MUSLIMS SEEKING QUALITY HALAL GOODS AND SERVICES, THE REACH OF ‘HALAL’ IS ACTUALLY MUCH GREATER THAN THAT. HALAL REPRESENTS ALL THAT WHICH IS LAWFUL, AND THEREFORE BENEFICIAL FOR HUMANKIND, AND THIS IS CONFIRMED BY THE FACT THAT HALAL PRODUCTS, NOT TO MENTION ISLAMIC FINANCIAL SERVICES, ARE ALREADY BEING USED NOT JUST BY MUSLIMS, BUT ALSO BY PEOPLE OF ALL RELIGIONS AND CULTURES.

7. IN THIS REGARD, THE CONCEPT OF HALAL MUST BE BROADENED TO MAKE IT THAT MUCH MORE APPEALING AND APPLICABLE IN THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE. HALAL STANDS FOR THAT WHICH IS GOOD, HEALTHY, SAFE AND OF HIGH QUALITY IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE. HALAL ALSO REPRESENTS JUST AND FAIR BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS, AS WELL AS CARING FOR ANIMALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT. HALAL EMBODIES SOCIAL JUSTICE AND WELFARE, AS WELL AS PROTECTION OF THE POOR AND THE WEAK. HALAL THEREFORE REPRESENTS VALUES THAT ARE HELD IN HIGH REGARD BY ALL PEOPLES, CULTURES AND RELIGIONS.

8. IN MALAYSIA, WE CAN SEE THAT THE HALAL INDUSTRY IS COMPRISED OF ALL SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY, WITH THE LOCAL CHINESE COMMUNITY PLAYING A STRONG PART IN THE PRODUCTION OF HALAL FOOD. THIS DIVERSITY IS REFLECTED IN THE WIDER GLOBAL PICTURE, WITH MANY NON-MUSLIM NATIONS

PLAYING LEADING ROLES IN THE PRODUCTION OF HALAL FOOD, PARTICULARLY IN THE REARING OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND POULTRY. INDEED, WE WELCOME SUCH PARTICIPATION FROM ALL QUARTERS IN OUR DESIRE TO SEE THE HALAL INDUSTRY – LOCALLY, REGIONALLY AND GLOBALLY – GO FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH.

9. I AM PLEASED TO NOTE THAT AT THE WORLD HALAL FORUM THERE WILL BE A NUMBER OF AGREEMENTS REACHED AND MANY TIE-UPS CONFIRMED. THIS INCLUDES A MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT SIGNED BETWEEN MALAYSIA'S PRIMA AGRI-PRODUCTS SENDIRIAN BERHAD AND AUSTRALIA'S COMGROUP SUPPLIES PRIVATE LIMITED. THIS AGREEMENT WILL SEE THE FORMATION OF A NEW ENTITY, COMGROUP-PRIMA SENDIRIAN BERHAD THAT WILL SUPPLY BEEF PATTIES TO THE LEADING REGIONAL FAST-FOOD CHAINS. I COMMEND SUCH AN INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION, AND HOPE THAT IT WILL BE THE FORERUNNER OF MANY MORE VENTURES TO COME.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

10. ALHAMDULILLAH, GIVEN OUR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS THUS FAR, MALAYSIA HAS BUILT A SOLID BASE FOR FUTURE GROWTH. NONETHELESS, AS A CULTURALLY DIVERSE MUSLIM NATION, STRIVING TO ACHIEVE DEVELOPED NATION STATUS BY THE YEAR 2020, WE RECOGNISE THAT THERE ARE MANY CHALLENGES AHEAD. IN ORDER TO NAVIGATE THROUGH SUCH CHALLENGES, THERE IS A NEED TO STRENGTHEN AND DIVERSIFY THE ECONOMY FURTHER. IN THIS REGARD, MALAYSIA HOPES TO PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE HALAL MARKETPLACE AS WE BELIEVE THAT THE HALAL MARKET OFFERS NEW SOURCES OF GROWTH, WEALTH AND ADDITIONAL INCOME FOR THE NATION.

11. WITH MALAYSIA'S EXPERIENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HALAL STANDARDS, IN AUDITING AND CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES, IN PROMOTING HALAL AT HOME AND ABROAD THROUGH TRADE EVENTS, CONFERENCES AND PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA, WE BELIEVE THAT MALAYSIA HAS GAINED SOUND KNOW-HOW IN NURTURING AND MANAGING THE HALAL SECTOR. WE HOPE TO SHARE THIS KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE WITH OTHER COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS, FOR THE GREATER GOOD OF DEVELOPING THE GLOBAL HALAL MARKET FURTHER. SUCH COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION WILL UNDOUBTEDLY RESULT IN A WIN-WIN OUTCOME FOR ALL THE PARTIES CONCERNED.

12. FURTHERMORE, MY GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO ENHANCE THE AGRICULTURAL AND AGRO-BASED INDUSTRIES ARE CERTAINLY IN TUNE WITH THE BROADER HALAL AGENDA. HALAL HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EFFECTIVE AGRICULTURAL AND AGRO-BASED SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY. OUR PLANS INCLUDE ENHANCING OUR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES AS WELL AS UPGRADING OUR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED FOOD PRODUCERS AND PROCESSORS; DEVELOPING STANDARDS AND IMPROVING OUR HALAL CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES; COUPLED WITH FINDING EFFECTIVE WAYS OF BRANDING AND MARKETING OUR HALAL PRODUCE. ALL OF THIS SHOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS ESTABLISHING MALAYSIA AS A LEADING HUB FOR HALAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES.

13. SUCH INITIATIVES ARE ALSO IN TANDEM WITH MALAYSIA'S VISION OF ISLAM HADHARI – LITERALLY, "CIVILISATIONAL ISLAM" – THAT IS, OF ISLAM AS AN IMPERATIVE AND A FORCE FOR PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT. INDEED, ISLAM HADHARI IS, IN SO MANY WAYS, EMBODIED IN THE HALAL HUB PROJECT THAT WE ARE PURSUING. HALAL IN ITS WIDEST SENSE TOUCHES ON SO MANY ASPECTS OF OUR LIVES AND OUR COMMUNITIES, AND THE REALISATION OF THE HALAL HUB PROJECT – WITHIN THE LARGER TEN PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM HADHARI – WILL HAVE A LARGE, POSITIVE EFFECT ON MALAYSIA AND BEYOND.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

14. IN ORDER TO FOCUS AND OPTIMISE OUR RESOURCES TO ESTABLISH MALAYSIA AS A LEADING HALAL HUB, I HAVE ANNOUNCED THE FORMATION OF THE HALAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, OR H.D.C., TO LEAD, COORDINATE AND HARMONISE OUR EFFORTS. H.D.C. WILL BE POSITIONED UNDER THE NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE (N.I.T.F.), AND WILL THEREFORE REPORT TO ONE OF THE MOST SENIOR COMMITTEES IN THE COUNTRY. AS CHAIRMAN OF THE N.I.T.F., THE NEW HALAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION WILL ULTIMATELY BE ANSWERABLE TO ME. SUCH A STRUCTURE ALLOWS FOR AN INTEGRATED APPROACH AS WELL AS FOR QUICK DECISION-MAKING IN THE PROCESS. IN TAKING THE LEAD IN DEVELOPING MALAYSIA'S HALAL INDUSTRY, THE H.D.C. WILL ASSUME THE FOLLOWING MAIN ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- FIRST, TO LEAD THE DEVELOPMENT OF HALAL STANDARDS, AS WELL AS AUDIT AND CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES, IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF 'HALAL';
- SECOND, TO DIRECT AND COORDINATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF MALAYSIA'S HALAL INDUSTRY AMONG ALL STAKEHOLDERS – BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE;
- THIRD, TO DIRECT AND MANAGE CAPACITY BUILDING FOR HALAL PRODUCERS AND RELATED SERVICE PROVIDERS;
- FOURTH, TO SUPPORT INVESTMENT INTO MALAYSIA'S HALAL INDUSTRY;
- FIFTH, TO FACILITATE THE GROWTH AND PARTICIPATION OF MALAYSIAN COMPANIES IN THE GLOBAL HALAL MARKET;
- SIXTH, TO DEVELOP, PROMOTE AND MARKET THE MALAYSIAN HALAL BRAND; AND
- SEVENTH, TO PROMOTE THE CONCEPT OF HALAL GOODS AND SERVICES TO THE WIDER WORLD.

15. I AM CONFIDENT THAT BY CARRYING OUT THESE DUTIES, THE H.D.C. WILL BE ABLE TO PLAY A LEADERSHIP ROLE AND ENABLE THE COUNTRY TO BRING OUR DIVERSE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE TO BEAR IN DEVELOPING THE HALAL-RELATED SECTORS. THE CREATION IN 2003 OF THE ISLAMIC FINANCIAL SERVICES BOARD (I.F.S.B.), BASED HERE IN KUALA LUMPUR, AS AN INTERNATIONAL BODY TO REGULATE AND HARMONISE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ISLAMIC FINANCIAL SERVICES INDUSTRY WORLDWIDE, CAN SERVE AS A USEFUL MODEL FOR THIS PURPOSE.

16. AFTER ALL, WE HAVE SEEN MALAYSIAN HALAL EXPERTISE PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN VARIOUS MARKETS AND INDUSTRIES AROUND THE WORLD – FROM MULTINATIONAL GIANTS IN FOOD PRODUCTION, RETAILING AND RESTAURANT OPERATIONS, THROUGH TO THE MORE SPECIALISED FIELDS OF AIRLINE FOOD AND OTHER FOOD SERVICE COMPANIES. IN THIS RESPECT, I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE HALAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION WILL PROVIDE ANOTHER MODEL OF HALAL EXCELLENCE THAT WOULD BE USEFUL AND RELEVANT NOT ONLY FOR MALAYSIA, BUT ALSO THE WORLD.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

17. AS WE GATHER HERE FOR THE WORLD HALAL FORUM, WE CAN REFLECT AND PONDER UPON THE FACT THAT IN SO MANY INSTANCES, ISLAM IS MISUNDERSTOOD BY THE NON-MUSLIM WORLD, AND OFTEN MISREPRESENTED BY THE MUSLIMS THEMSELVES. IN ACTUAL FACT, ISLAM IS A FORCE FOR CIVILISATION AND DEVELOPMENT; THAT SEEKS OUT JUSTICE AND BALANCE IN THE WORLD; AND THAT BRINGS GUIDANCE AND WISDOM FOR ALL HUMANKIND. BECAUSE OF ITS WIDE ACCEPTANCE ACROSS THE WORLD, ACROSS COMMUNITIES AND CULTURES, THIS NEW GROWTH OF THE HALAL INDUSTRY OFFERS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO BRING SOME OF THIS GUIDANCE AND WISDOM TO BENEFIT A GREATER NUMBER OF PEOPLE.

18. I HAVE NO DOUBT, LOOKING AT THE PROGRAMME AND JUDGING FROM THE HIGH-LEVEL PRESENTATIONS TO BE GIVEN AT THIS FORUM, THAT WE WILL ALL BENEFIT FROM THE WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE THAT WILL BE SHARED OVER THE COMING TWO DAYS. I WELCOME ALL OF YOU ONCE AGAIN, ESPECIALLY OUR GUESTS FROM ABROAD, AND COMMEND THE EFFORTS OF ALL THOSE PRESENT HERE IN WORKING TOWARDS THIS INAUGURAL WORLD HALAL FORUM.

19. WE ASK GOD THAT THIS GATHERING, ON THIS MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECT-MATTER, RECEIVES HIS BLESSINGS AND PROTECTION, SO THAT IT MAY PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN PROMOTING THE LAWFUL AND THE WHOLESOME, THE HALAL AND TAYYIB, FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL HUMANKIND. ON THAT NOTE, WITH THE RECITATION OF BISMILLAHIR RAHMANIR RAHIM, IT IS MY PLEASURE TO DECLARE OPEN THE WORLD HALAL FORUM 2006.

THANK YOU.