

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE FORBES ASIA FABULOUS 50 & BUSINESSMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD
CEREMONY AND DINNER
AT PUTRAJAYA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE (PICC)
4 DECEMBER 2007**

BISMILLAHIR RAHMANIR RAHIM

ASSALAMUALAIKUM WARAHMATULLAHI WABARAKATUH AND GOOD AFTERNOON

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DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

1. ALHAMDULILLAH, ALL PRAISE AND GLORY ARE FOR ALLAH S.W.T., FOR IT IS WITH HIS BLESSINGS AND GUIDANCE THAT WE ARE GATHERED HERE TODAY.

2. I WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND A WARM MALAYSIAN WELCOME TO ALL OUR GUESTS, PARTICULARLY THOSE FROM OVERSEAS, WHO ARE HERE TO ATTEND THIS IMPORTANT EVENT. MALAYSIA IS DELIGHTED TO HOST THE FORBES ASIA FABULOUS 50 AND BUSINESSMAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS CEREMONY AND DINNER.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

3. THE FORBES ASIA FABULOUS 50 AND BUSINESSMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD IS A CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE.

4. EACH YEAR, 50 OF THE BIGGEST AND BEST COMPANIES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION ARE GIVEN THE HONOUR AND RECOGNITION OF BEING PROCLAIMED AS ONE OF THE FABULOUS 50. YOU ARE ALL SUCCESSFUL COMPANIES, WITH STRONG BUSINESS PRESENCE AND ENVIABLE TRACK RECORDS. MORE IMPORTANTLY, YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN OUT OF MANY EXCELLENT COMPANIES THROUGH A STRICT SELECTION PROCESS THAT IS DRIVEN ENTIRELY BY MERIT, THAT'S WHAT I HAVE BEEN TOLD.

5. THIS EVENING, FORBES ASIA WILL ALSO ANNOUNCE THE WINNER OF THE BUSINESSMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD. THIS AWARD RECOGNISES THE PERSON WHOSE ACHIEVEMENTS REPRESENT THE BENCHMARK FOR BUSINESS. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THIS AWARD ALSO CELEBRATES THE VISION, ENERGY AND CREATIVITY OF THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE THE ROLE MODELS OF BUSINESS EXCELLENCE.

6. THERE IS A VERY STRONG THEME THAT RUNS THROUGH BOTH AWARDS – THE RECOGNITION AND CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE. WE HONOUR THE DEDICATION AND HARD WORK REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE EXCELLENCE. WE CELEBRATE, SO THAT WE MAY INSPIRE OTHERS TO ALSO WALK THE PATH TOWARDS EXCELLENCE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

7. HERE IN MALAYSIA, WE UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR EXCELLENCE, AND WE SHARE THE SAME GOAL OF INSPIRING AND ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE.

8. IN 1991, MALAYSIA SET FOR ITSELF AN AMBITIOUS TARGET: TO BECOME A DEVELOPED NATION BY THE YEAR 2020. WHEN I BECAME PRIME MINISTER IN OCTOBER 2003, I REALISED THAT WE NEEDED TO STEP UP OUR EFFORTS, IF WE WERE TO REACH OUR DESIRED GOAL.

9. HENCE THROUGHOUT MY TENURE AS PRIME MINISTER, I HAVE SPOKEN REPEATEDLY ABOUT THE NEED FOR “CEMERLANG, GEMILANG, TERBILANG” OR “EXCELLENCE, GLORY, DISTINCTION”. THIS SHOULD BE OUR HALLMARK. THIS HAS BECOME THE CLARION CALL FOR MALAYSIANS. I HAVE CALLED ON MY COUNTRYMEN TO ASPIRE TOWARDS ACHIEVING CONSISTENT AND SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS. I HAVE REMINDED MALAYSIANS THAT EXCELLENCE IS NOT A DESTINATION, BUT A CONTINUOUS PURSUIT OF VALUE ADDING ON ONE’S ACHIEVEMENT.

10. I HAVE ALSO SOUGHT TO WEAVE THE ESSENCE OF EXCELLENCE INTO THE VERY FABRIC OF THE NATION. IN 2006, I ANNOUNCED THE “NATIONAL MISSION” AS A COMPREHENSIVE AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE MALAYSIA’S EFFORTS TOWARDS ACHIEVING DEVELOPED NATION STATUS BY 2020 AND TO GO BEYOND. THE NATIONAL MISSION SEEKS TO DRIVE THE NATION TOWARDS EXCELLENCE THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FIVE KEY THRUSTS; NAMELY: MOVING UP THE VALUE CHAIN, DEVELOPING FIRST-CLASS HUMAN CAPITAL, ADDRESSING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISPARITIES, IMPROVING THE PEOPLE’S QUALITY OF LIFE, AND ENHANCING THE COUNTRY’S INSTITUTIONAL AND IMPLEMENTATION CAPABILITIES.

11. TO CULTIVATE THE MINDSET OF EXCELLENCE, I HAVE SOUGHT TO INTRODUCE A PERFORMANCE CULTURE IN BOTH THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS. ON 14 MAY 2004, I ANNOUNCED A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSFORMATION PLAN FOR GOVERNMENT-LINKED COMPANIES, WITH STRONG EMPHASIS ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (K.P.I.’S). MORE RECENTLY, I ANNOUNCED THAT SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS WOULD ALSO BE MEASURED ON CLEAR AND OBJECTIVE K.P.I.’S BEGINNING JANUARY 2008.

12. I AM PARTICULARLY PROUD OF OUR EFFORTS IN TRANSFORMING G.L.C.’S. WE INTRODUCED K.P.I.’S, STRENGTHENED CORPORATE GOVERNANCE, AND INSTITUTED MANY OTHER WIDE-RANGING REFORMS. WHERE NEEDED, WE BROUGHT IN NEW LEADERSHIP, WHICH HELPED TO INFUSE NEW ENERGY AND NEW IDEAS.

13. THREE YEARS LATER, OUR EFFORTS HAVE BORNE FRUIT. AS OF 30 NOVEMBER 2007, THE MARKET CAPITALISATION OF THE TOP 20 G.L.C.’S HAS INCREASED BY MORE THAN 83 PERCENT OR BY ABOUT 121 BILLION RINGGIT SINCE THE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM BEGAN. DURING THE SAME PERIOD, TOTAL

SHAREHOLDER RETURNS OF THE TOP 20 G.L.C.'S WAS RECORDED AT 24.4 PERCENT COMPOUNDED ANNUAL GROWTH RATE (C.A.G.R.), OUTPERFORMING THE KUALA LUMPUR COMPOSITE INDEX (K.L.C.I.) BY 3.3 PERCENT.

14. MORE IMPORTANTLY, I BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE BEGUN TO SOW THE SEEDS FOR EXCELLENCE AND GREATNESS. C.I.M.B. INVESTMENT BANK HAS MERGED WITH RETAIL BANK BUMIPUTERA COMMERCE, TO CREATE A UNIVERSAL BANK THAT IS POISED TO BECOME A REGIONAL GIANT. MALAYSIA AIRLINES HAS MADE A DRAMATIC COMEBACK, AND HAS NOW SET ITS SIGHTS ON BECOMING A FIVE STAR AIRLINE.

15. MOST RECENTLY, THE MERGER OF THREE MALAYSIAN PLANTATIONS GIANTS HAS BEEN COMPLETED, LEADING TO THE REBIRTH OF SIME DARBY BERHAD. TODAY, SIME DARBY IS A DIVERSIFIED MULTINATIONAL CONGLOMERATE, AND THE LARGEST COMPANY ON THE BURSA MALAYSIA BY MARKET CAPITALISATION. WITH ITS RE-LISTING COMPLETED LAST WEEK, SIME DARBY WILL NOW EMBARK ON ITS OWN JOURNEY OF EXCELLENCE TOWARDS BECOMING A GLOBAL CHAMPION.

16. AS I SCAN THE LIST OF WINNERS FOR THIS YEAR'S FABULOUS 50, I CANNOT HELP BUT NOTICE THAT ONLY ONE MALAYSIAN COMPANY – NAMELY, I.O.I. CORPORATION – IS INCLUDED IN THIS YEAR'S LIST. AS FOR THE BUSINESSMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD, SO FAR NO MALAYSIAN HAS WON IT.

17. I HOPE THAT AS MALAYSIA CONTINUES ON ITS JOURNEY FOR EXCELLENCE, OUR MAYBANK'S, C.I.M.B.'S AND SIME DARBY'S WILL ONE DAY BE INDUCTED INTO THE FORBES ASIA FABULOUS 50. IN THE SAME VEIN, I ALSO LOOK FORWARD TO THE DAY WHEN A MALAYSIAN WILL BE ABLE TO CLAIM THE HONOUR OF BEING AWARDED THE FORBES ASIA BUSINESSMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD. IT IS A DREAM BUT I THINK THIS DREAM CAN BECOME A REALITY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

18. EXCELLENCE, BY ITS VERY DEFINITION, IS A RARE THING. ONLY THE BEST CAN COUNT THEMSELVES WITHIN THE RANKS OF THE FABULOUS.

19. THIS EVENING, I WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE THE WINNERS OF THE FABULOUS 50, AS WELL AS THE WINNER OF THE BUSINESSMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD. YOU ARE ALL WORTHY WINNERS, AND TRULY DESERVING OF THE ACCOLADE OF BUSINESS EXCELLENCE.

20. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO COMMEND FORBES ASIA FOR THIS IMPORTANT INITIATIVE. BY SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE SUCCESS OF ASIAN COMPANIES, YOU ARE PLAYING YOUR OWN INVALUABLE PART IN FOSTERING BUSINESS EXCELLENCE IN ASIA.

21. FINALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO WISH YOU ALL THE BEST, AND MAY ALL OF YOU CONTINUE TO LIVE THE VALUES OF EXCELLENCE IN EVERYTHING THAT YOU DO.

THANK YOU.