

Speech at Le Tour de Langkawi Team Presentation Ceremony

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1. Indeed, it gives me great pleasure to be here tonight.

2. When the idea of Le Tour de Langkawi (LTdL) was mooted way back in 1993, I thought it was an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. Firstly, it is to showcase the beauty and uniqueness of Malaysia and Langkawi to the world and secondly, I wanted Malaysia, and Langkawi specifically, to be the hub for sports tourism.

3. Today, that hope, dream or ambition is a reality. This year alone, Langkawi is host to numerous international sporting events – rugby, sailing, beach volleyball, dragon boat race, tennis and marathon – to name just a few. And these are annual events that have been coming back to Langkawi for many years, bringing with them not only competitors but spectators – all who would be tourists in the end.

4. This has contributed positively to the local economic development of Langkawi and Malaysia in general. On that note, I am pleased to know that Langkawi will be the host for two LTdL 2019 stages, the penultimate challenge on April 12 and the finale on April 13. Though two days are insufficient to showcase the beauty of the island, it is nevertheless a golden

opportunity for Langkawi to be in the limelight, after a few years of being excluded from the race route.

5. Equally significant this year is the fact that another of Malaysia's pride – the Petronas Twin Towers will feature prominently in LTdL and it starts at this very moment. What was usually organised in an indoor venue, the Team Presentation event is now held in front of this beautiful esplanade, with the fascinating Petronas Twin Towers as the backdrop.

6. Tomorrow, the flag off event, which will feature the Twin Towers, again, will be telecast live to nearly 400 million viewers, including via online platforms. This is one of the reasons why sports tourism matters. The Government can save millions in ad-buys or other promotions with exposure such as this. I trust that the organisers, besides taking into consideration the standard technical requirements, have chosen scenic and iconic routes that would make the race exciting and a pleasure to watch.

7. I understand Genting Highlands, the much-awaited route is returning as the “Queen Stage” of LTdL, with riders going against nature with the steep climb to the hilltop. Again, we shall see other scenic locations in Malaysia being featured internationally – from Ulu Yam to Batang Kali and the summit of Genting Highlands. Genting Highlands, as we all know, is Malaysia's premier holiday destination and with this global exposure, I am sure Malaysia's status as one of the premier holiday destinations in the region will be further enhanced.

8. It would be impossible for the Government to organise an event of this magnitude without the help of Malaysian corporates. I am pleased to note that there are many who had come forward to assist the Government in ensuring a successful LTdL, especially the Title Sponsor – PETRONAS Bhd and the main sponsor – Genting Malaysia Bhd.

9. I hope to see more coming forward for the next edition of LTdL, which will be celebrating its 25th anniversary next year. The theme for this year – “Sports Unite, Cycling Contributes - aptly describes another mission the LTdL is carrying as a major national event. LTdL is much more than just a race. It is a platform for us to be united in our ride together as a nation, putting aside our differences be it in ideology, background or ethnicity. We must be united if we want to bring the country to the next level and through sports that spurs passion and excitement - unity can certainly be pursued and promoted.

10. I hope for the glory days of LTdL. I have seen and met many people who had fond memories of the race, who waited in the blazing sun just to catch a glimpse of the riders and who cheered for the local teams. People were excited about LTdL, about what it means to Malaysia which goes beyond the race. It was a testimony of how Malaysia as a country could deliver an event of international standing and we were eager to show Malaysian hospitality and its colourful cultures.

11. We are proud that LTdL is just a category below the World Tour races since it was awarded the 2.0 Hors Class status in 2005. Among others, this prestigious race is able to attract many renowned teams and cyclists to Malaysia due to its sterling reputation.

12. I understand that for the LTdL 2019 edition, the organisers managed to attract riders who are highly competitive and expected to give each other a strong challenge. I am sure each team would have their own strategies and focus, with all aiming for the yellow jersey in the individual general classification, the King of the Mountains jersey or the teams' classification.

13. I wish a very good luck to those taking part in the race. Without doubt you will display the highest level of sportsmanship, along with courage and

determination in each race you are competing. We are excited to see some actions and hope you are all ready, mentally and physically to face the challenges in the next eight days.

Thank you.

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