

SPEECH BY: YAB Dato' Seri Dr. **Mahathir** Mohamad  
Prime Minister

EVENT: Forum on the US-Malaysia Business and Technology Partnership

VENUE:

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I am pleased to note that bilateral ties between Malaysia and the United States of America have been good and improving all the time. American trade and investment activities have, until recently, been concentrated in the electronics industry. The booming economies of the Asia-Pacific have witnessed a renewed vigour by American companies to diversify their investment portfolios in the region. From the humble beginning of labour-intensive semiconductor assembly of the 1970's to today's more sophisticated, value-added manufacturing plants that also provide marketing and customer support, Malaysia has benefited from this shift to higher-end manufacturing by American firms.

Malaysia is very keen to attract more of this type of investors that can enhance the development of high-technology industries in the country. In order to bring Malaysia closer to its Vision 2020, i.e. to becoming a fully industrialised country by that year, the government has embarked on several ambitious projects, one of which is the creation of a Multimedia Super Corridor that maximises the usage of multimedia in developing new ideas, products, marketing strategies, and new perspectives for trade and industry.

As Malaysia marches into the 21st century, we need to enhance our international competitiveness by focusing on higher technological capacity, increased efficiency and continuous improvements. Malaysia no longer has the comparative advantage of cheap labour as countries in the region have opened up and liberalised their trade policies. The Malaysian government has decided to encourage more technology-intensive industries, particularly those involving automation and robots in order to reduce our dependence on cheap labour and to retain our competitiveness.

In this light, I welcome and commend the initiatives of the Pacific Basin Economic Council's (PBEC) Malaysia Committee and the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI) in organising this forum on the US-Malaysia Business and Technology Partnership. This meeting of corporate leaders from the two countries will explore mutually beneficial opportunities available under the Seventh Malaysia Plan. This forum will provide the right information on the concerns of the Malaysian government and the future directions it is taking. I wish this forum every success.

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