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SPEECH BY
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DATIN SERI DR SITI HASMAH BTE HAJI MOHD ALI
AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCHING
OF TEXTILE WEAVING FROM LOOM TO COMPUTER EXHIBITION
AT THE MUZIUM NEGARA
ON MONDAY, 15 DECEMBER, 1997
AT 11.45 A.M.

Firstly, let me extend a warm welcome to all guests and delegates from ASEAN member countries to this exhibition on Textile Weaving From Loom to Computer.

2. It is indeed a pleasure and honour for me to be invited to officiate this colourful ceremony. I would like to express my appreciation to the ASEAN committee on Culture and Information (ASEAN-COCI) who had kindly sponsored this exhibition, and also to the Department of Museums and Antiquities and the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism who organized and managed this exhibition. Although this exhibition is specially scheduled in conjunction with the informal meeting of the ASEAN Heads of Government in Kuala Lumpur, I personally feel that there are lot of benefits we can derive from this exhibition.

3. South-East Asia has one of the most dazzling textile traditions in the world. Both indigenous and foreign influences in their cultural diversity are captured in an overwhelming variety of textiles form, which is manifested in a wide range of materials used and the display of a myriad of weaving techniques, colours and design motifs.

4. Textiles play an important role in the economy, social and religious life of the people, and its study provides important insights into the many different cultures of ASEAN member countries. Traditional textiles particularly are one of the most vital and important categories of Southeast Asian art. Formed from an extensive range of locally produced and imported raw

materials and astonishing number of techniques -- including many different types of applique and decorative weaving, 'ikat' and other forms of tie-dying, batik, and embroidery -- Southeast Asian textiles are used to fashion a variety of objects. There are items of everyday clothing, sacred and ceremonial costume, shrouds and wrapping cloths and textiles also appear as hargigers, banners, and ritual regalia.

5. Since decorative textiles are of great importance as elaborate festive garments, as symbols of prestige, and as items of wealth and religious significance, the making of such cloth often requires physical and spiritual precautions to protect the quality of dyeing and weaving, and well-being of artisan. Consequently, legends and rituals surround both origins and the making of important fabrics. The texture of the materials, the skill of the craftswomen, the richness of the colours, and the clarity and intricacy of the patterning and designs are the usual criteria for assessing the beauty and merit of these textiles. Many designs and motifs convey important messages significant only to those familiar with the particular social and religious principles of the people who have produced them. It is only by seeing cloths in their cultural context that we can begin to understand their value and meaning.

6. Although the study of Southeast ASEAN textiles has expanded on various fronts and there have been a number of comprehensive studies of the textiles of specific ethnic groups which combines valuable synthesis of the scholarship on the subject, an exhibition focusing on textile weaving technique by using the traditional loom and the latest computer technique in textile industry is seldom discussed and shown to the general public. I would like to express my sincere thanks to those concerned who mooted the idea of having this interesting and important exhibition in Malaysia at this time of the year. I am sure textiles lovers and the general public will not miss the chance to witness themselves the beauty and richness of ASEAN culture through this textiles and weaving technique.

7. On this note, I have the pleasure to declare this exhibition on "Textile Weaving From Loom to Computer" officially open.
