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Y.Bhg. Encik V. Danabalan, Ketua Setiausaha Kementerian sains, Teknologi dan Alama Sekitar, Yang Berusaha Ahli-ahli Lembaga SIRIM, Y.Bhg. Dato' Dr Ahmad Tajuddin Ali, Ketua Pengarah SIRIM, Dato'-Dato', Datin, tuan-tuan dan puan-puan yang saya hormati sekalian.

Assalamualaikum wbt., salam sejahtera dan selamat pagi.

Terlebih dahulu saya ingin mengucapkan syabas kepada pengurusan SIRIM atas daya usaha menganjurkan Persidangan Pegawai-pegawai Kanan SIRIM atau PERSPEKS pada pagi ini dalam usaha menangani cabaran-cabaran masa kini, di samping membuat persediaan menghadapi era baru, paradigma baru.

Saya ucapkan terima kasih kepada pengurusan SIRIM kerana menjemput saya untuk merasmikan persidangan ini.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased that SIRIM has taken the initiative to have the Conference again after a lapse of a few years.

This get together for SIRIM's senior officers is timely: to prepare the Institute in moving towards corporatization and to prepare programmes for implementation under the Seventh Malaysia Plan.

It is evident that the Government's drive toward privatization is moving in the right direction, given the number of Government entities that have been privatized, and the obvious success of most, if not all, of these undertakings. The drive for privatization has been further emphasized under the National Development Policy and the Second Outline Perspective Plan (1991-2000).

The Government's privatization policy is an important element of national development policy and SIRIM is one of the several organizations identified for corporatization under the Privatization Master Plan. Corporatization is considered part of the privatization process whereby the corporatized organization is freed from the usual bureaucratic and financial constraints associated with government departments and agencies, thus providing the organization greater flexibility to respond to changes in the market place.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Needless to say, Malaysia's economic fundamentals are in fine shape today. The results so far speak for themselves.

Growth of the last five years has been in excess of 8 per cent per annum. Inflation is being kept at bay. It was held to 3.8 per cent in 1993 and is set to slow further this year, to about 3.5 per cent. Government finances are healthy. Last year, for the first time, despite cuts in taxes and import duties, we had a surplus budget, breaking a run of deficits since independence. There are many other positive indicators to the healthy state of our economy, but this is not the time for complacency. Behind these glowing indicators are signs of the need for new measures to ensure sustained growth. Malaysia's comparative advantages of cheap labour and fertile land are beginning to wear out.

Malaysian businesses need to create new areas of competitive advantage to replace the eroded ones. Malaysians need more and better skills so the country can speed up its graduation from a low-cost producer to a high-tech powerhouse.

Technology and innovation have been identified as critical factors for building competitive advantage in the nineties and beyond. The Government is doing its part by creating a conducive environment for the development of indigeneous technological capability. Funding for research in the public sector is at a level commensurate with the capacity to implement. There are already numerous fiscal incentives to promote R&D in the private sector. But there is still much to be done.

As technology development is key to promote and sustain growth, it is vital that SIRIM, as the organisation tasked with industrial R&D, standards and quality, gears itself up and work in partnership with the industry. SIRIM should ensure that its R&D is market-driven, innovative and relevant to the needs of industry. SIRIM must continue to work towards ensuring that its standardisation and quality programmes are supportive to effort of industry in the marketing of their products locally and overseas.

But can SIRIM response effectively to the needs of industry under the existing set-up? The amendments to the SIRIM Act which came into effect on 24th July 1993 provided a major paradigm shift for SIRIM. The amended Act put in place the legal framework for SIRIM to undertake commercial ventures, either on its own or in partnership with another party or parties. With those changes, SIRIM now has greater flexibility to respond to urgent needs of industry and help them achieve competitive edge through technology and quality.

However, even so, under the existing framework, there are still impediments to SIRIM being naturally proactive. This basically is due to the fact that SIRIM is still a government agency, bound by the rules and procedures of government, in areas such as appointments, rewards, discipline, purchasing, etc. Corporatization should enable SIRIM to free itself of the bureaucracy and constraints face by the Institute today. However, this transition must be carefully managed. It must be fully communicated to all those that will be affected, especially the staff.

I am very pleased to see that SIRIM has been making preparations for the organization as well as the staff to move towards corporatization. I know of the serious effort at making the administrative, personnel and financial systems to be more in tune with the demands of a corporatized organisation. SIRIM has published the Mid-Term Review of the Corporate Plan 1991-1995. I am convinced that the new spirit of outwardness will help propel SIRIM to be the catalyst for enhancing the industrialization process of Malaysia.

The success of SIRIM or for that matter, any other organisation, will rest on its most valuable asset, which is the people that make up SIRIM, the staff. It is the staff that will determine the success of SIRIM's corporatization.

Besides benefiting the nation and the organization, corporatization must also benefits the staff in terms of better rewards and recognition. SIRIM should always stress on continuous improvement. The only way that SIRIM can effectively brings about continuous improvement and its inherent benefits is by tapping into the basic needs of pride and achievements of the staff. Empowerment must be built into the job. Staff feel empowered when they have clear job responsibilities, when they can continuously measure their own successes, when they are part of the teams that make meaningful decisions about work activities and when they are supported by superiors and colleagues without taking away job responsibility. These are not easy goals, but they are achievable especially when SIRIM becomes a corporate body.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to note of the many positive changes in SIRIM in the last few years. The aggressive approach taken by SIRIM to inculcate the development of quality culture and technology consciousness among the Malaysian industry has led to a significant increase in the volume of services provided to industry. The last five years has seen four fold increased in the value of services provided by the Institute - from RM5.2 million in 1989 to RM20.2 million in 1993. Within the same period, improvements in quality management practices within SIRIM has led to three-fold improvement in productivity. The trend augurs well for SIRIM in its efforts to become a successful corporate body.

SIRIM's continuous efforts aimed at enhancing the effectiveness in the delivery of its programmes to Malaysian industry through an integrated quality management programme has won for itself the nation's highest recognition in 1993, the Prime Minister's Quality Award. Nevertheless, SIRIM should not stop there. The Institute should strive for continuous quality improvement if it wants to be a renowned organisation for industrial research and standardisation in this region, if not in the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen, It is my hope that this Conference comes out with concrete strategies and

recommendations which would be useful inputs for SIRIM's future plans and directions. I look forward to further improvements that would transform SIRIM into a truly customer-driven organization and also a successful corporate entity.

Y.Bhg. Dato'-Dato', Datin, tuan-tuan dan puan-puan, Dengan kata-kata itu, saya dengan sukacitanya merasmikan Persidangan Pegawai-pegawai Kanan SIRIM 1994.