

OPENING CEREMONY, WORLD HALAL FORUM
02/04/2012

Puan Hajjah Jumaatun Azmi, founder and managing director of KasehDia

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Seri Jamil Bidin,
Chief Executive Officer of Halal Industry Development Corporation

Sir Iqbal Sacranie,
Chairman of Muslim Aid, United Kingdom

Encik Darhim Dali Hashim,
CEO of International Halal Integrity Alliance, host of the World Halal Forum

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners

Tan Sri-Tan Sri, Puan Sri-Puan Sri,
Dato-Dato, Datin-Datin

Distinguished guests

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

Assalamualaikumwarahmatullahiwabarakatuh.

Salam sejahtera dan salam satu Malaysia.

Saya mengambil kesempatan ini mengucapkan tahniah kepada penganjur di atas penganjuran World Halal Forum 2012, dimana saya yakin akan secara langsung menyumbang kepada pembangunan perkhidmatan dan produk halal di peringkat serantau dan global.

2. Penganjuran Forum ini di Malaysia, turut mencerminkan komitmen dan dedikasi berterusan Kerajaan dalam mengukuhkan landasan bagi membangunkan industri dan pasaran halal, samaada dalam sektor perkhidmatan ataupun produk, kerana potensi komersil dan permintaan yang tinggi di seluruh dunia.

3. It is indeed an honour for me to address this global platform which serves as the pinnacle event for the halal industry worldwide. I congratulate the team at KasehDia, founder of the World Halal Forum, for putting together another world class event, now in its seventh year.

4. I was informed that many of the delegates present here today have been attending the World Halal Forum for seven years in a row. Some coming from as far as Brazil, Canada and Chile to make the annual journey to Kuala Lumpur in order to gain an insight into the latest developments, future trends and network amongst the various stakeholders.

5. From regulators to industry players; to Shariah scholars and academicians – the World Halal Forum provides a platform for the best minds to gather and learn from each other. With

35 different nationalities represented here today, this augurs well for a truly global movement that will help make the world a better place, insyAllah.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. It is to be emphasized that Halal products and services should be promoted and targeted, not only for the consumers amongst the global Muslim community, but also amongst the greater number of non-muslims, who would readily accept Halal products and services, if they met global standards and quality, and conform to prevailing market requirements which among others include environment and safety standards.

7. The Halal industry movement is certainly not a new phenomenon in Malaysia. The need for Halal certification and regulation arose, not out of government intervention, but from the demand by the consumers. As the country underwent a period of industrialisation and rapid growth, a burgeoning middle class of Malay Muslim consumers emerged. And I certainly believe that this phenomenon transcends across Muslim communities the world over.

8. The power of the Muslim dollars, so to speak, and the greater acceptance of Halal standards by communities of various religious beliefs, compelled food service operators and manufacturers to adopt Halal standards and certification. Even though Halal certification in Malaysia is voluntary, we see that its adoption has become a default practice.

9. As we all here have already known, that opportunities in the Halal market are endless, as the Halal concept encompass the entire value chain of commercial activities. Today, we have realised that branding, marketing and advertising can be tailored towards spurring downstream business activities and opportunities. Therefore, there must continuously be creativity and innovation in products and services development to enhance further the Halal industry, and brand.

10. I sincerely hope that this Halal Forum will deliberate and expound on ways for innovation and the culture of creativity to be immersed and embedded in the entire value chain of the Halal industry. The need for entities to invest in these crucial elements remain second to none, and will present expanding range of Halal products and services to the global market.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. The realm of Halal certification has evolved from just meat and poultry to cover downstream processed goods such as dairy, confectionary, personal care and medicine.

12. This realm has now extended, as mentioned earlier, beyond products and into services. Logistics service providers are now clamouring to be Halal certified as they realise their vital role in ensuring a Halal supply chain. Laboratories are offering their services to support testing of products for Halal compliance.

13. In order to optimise the immense potential of the Global Halal industry, and to further exploit the global Halal products and services, there is further need to acquire greater understanding of the various aspects of halal accreditation as well as ensuring uniformity in the application of Halal standards globally.

14. In this regard, highest appreciation goes to the International Halal Integrity Alliance, or IHI Alliance, host of the World Halal Forum, as there are now published Halal standards that

govern each sector of the supply chain – from upstream activities such as animal feed, animal welfare and handling and of course slaughter, to downstream sectors such as processed foods, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals.

15. With IHI Alliance’s Halal standards in the supporting services as well, such as Food Service, Logistics and Laboratory Testing, this integrated approach ensures that Halal integrity is maintained throughout an unbroken supply chain – from farm to fork.

16. In this context, I am also happy to note that Malaysia has assumed a leading role in introducing standards for Halal accreditation and also has the relevant expertise to award certification to various non-food products particularly pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and logistics. Therefore, Malaysian Government is always ready to collaborate with any parties, or further strengthen existing programmes such as with International Halal Integrity Alliance, to ensure an efficient Halal eco-system in country, and hence take advantage of the commercial potential of the regional and global Halal markets.

17. The “Halal evolution”, as such, will not end there, however. The consumer is an ever-changing being whose tastes, preferences, values and priorities evolve over time. If we add to that the impact of social media and online tools that empower the consumer, then we are indeed faced with a complex set of dynamics.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

18. The Pew Research Center estimated that 60% of the world’s Muslims are below the age of 25 years. The power of this demographic group is further magnified if we consider that the youth tend to be the more discerning and vocal segment of society.

19. This group of discerning youth are not satisfied with merely compliance with Halal standards. They are asking, “what values does the brand stand for?” “how does the company give back to society?” “what are they doing to mitigate the effects of global warming?”

20. I am glad to see that the World Halal Forum programme this year is addressing these issues clearly demonstrating its leadership as the cutting edge of understanding the consumer. WHF has always identified innovative and exciting ways to send its key messages across, bridging communication and generation gaps. I was also informed that this year, WHF is repeating its key messaging through social networks, media and the arts. This is something which will surely be well received among the youth and a good example of using new tools to reach out to the masses.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

21. Under this climate where the world has becoming extra sensitive about Islam, be it for the ultras or the liberals, the Malaysian Government always believes in projecting a more moderate and balanced stand. Malaysia has proven that its system of governance, based on moderate Islam, has worked and can be a good model for other countries in the world to emulate especially Islamic countries.

22. Now we have planned initiatives for the next phase of wave of transformation to become a high-income nation. However, the success of a system is not just about numbers but also about whether it could improve the quality of life and about good values. For this reason, I

would like to commend WHF for successfully setting the tone of cultivating not only a universal appeal on Halal lifestyle, but also promoting good values via various, contemporary channels.

23. Too often we hear and see negativity associated with Islam in the mainstream media – “jihad” connotes terrorism and suicide bombing; “Shariah law” conjures images of stoning and lashing whilst “Halal” is misconstrued as a barbaric form of slaughter.

24. It is time that we as Muslims stop having to go on the defensive. We must lead by example and present to the world that Islam is about peace, beauty, love and harmony. Through art, music, literature, comics and other stimulating mediums, these positive messages can be conveyed in a manner that is universally appealing to all, Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

25. Congratulations once again to the World Halal Forum team who have put up a significant performance and I wish them plenty of success in the future, insyAllah. World Halal Forum is a great example of a successful private initiative that serves the better good. I can assure that the Malaysian government will continue to support WHF in its endeavours to bring awareness on halal as well as to communicate the true values of Islam in a contemporary manner that is appreciated by all.

26. To our visitors who have come from afar, I welcome you to our beautiful country and I do sincerely hope you have a chance to see beyond just the KLCC Convention Centre, although I must say it is a very nice convention centre – and Halal certified, no less!

27. To all of you at World Halal Forum 2012, I wish you a successful and fruitful deliberations and outcomes.

28. And with the holy words from the Quran, Bismillahirrahmanirrahim, I declare the Seventh World Halal Forum officially open.

Thank you, and the very best to all once again.