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PERDANA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION  
**SME LEADERS PROGRAMME 2022**  
KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP EXCELLENCE

YABHG TUN DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD

PERDANA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION

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YAYASAN KEPIMPINAN PERDANA

CLOSING SESSION WITH REMARKS  
YABhg Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad  
Former Prime Minister of Malaysia, &  
Honorary President, PLF

DATE 25th May 2022  
TIME 4.50pm  
VENUE Perdana Leadership Foundation, Putrajaya

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## **PLF SME Leaders Programme 2022: “Knowledge Exchange For Entrepreneurship Excellence”**

**YABhg Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad**

**Former Prime Minister of Malaysia & Honorary President of  
Perdana Leadership Foundation**

### **Closing Address: “Achieving Success in Business and Life”**

1. Firstly, I would like to thank the organiser of the PLF-SME LEADERS PROGRAMME for inviting me to speak on the subject, “Achieving Success in Business and Life”.
2. I am sorry that I cannot be with you today physically as I’m travelling. I hope this recording makes up, at least a bit, for my absence.
3. Nevertheless, I am happy to be able to share some thoughts with you and I hope they will be useful.
4. Even though I’m not a businessman but rather a full-time politician, I had some personal experience dabbling in business in my younger days.
5. I had my own private practice as a medical doctor at a time when it was quite rare for doctors to leave government service. Although I regard that clinic as community service rather than a profit-oriented enterprise, it still taught me a thing or two about balancing the books and customer service.

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6. In fact, prior to medical school, I also had the opportunity in petty trading.
7. Little though they maybe, but the experience gave me a taste of doing business.
8. Of course, when I became Prime Minister, it is inevitable that interaction with the private and business sectors became commonplace.
9. These sectors are crucial in ensuring the well-being of the nation's economy and it is my duty then, as the leader of the nation to ensure the business community thrives in a conducive environment.
10. This conducive environment is created through sound and effective policies that encompasses all aspect of national development.
11. It has to be noted that policies though compartmentalised by sectors do not function in silo as they are intertwined and complement each other. By the same token, the private and business sectors, in pursuit of their economic objectives must not be detached from the society they seek to flourish and grow.
12. Without doubt, the small and medium business sector is a vital driving force. These are new companies that have the potential to grow beyond SME size to become national and even multi-national companies.
13. In Malaysia, the number of micro, small and medium businesses are more than 1.2 million in 2021. This has been increasing every year since 2016, a development that is both healthy and encouraging.
14. I wish to congratulate the business leaders and entrepreneurs present in this auditorium today because of their persistence as I am fully aware starting and growing a business is not easy, especially in today's volatile times.
15. While the measure of success for SMEs and the business sectors are generally measured by the bottom line, I believe there are other aspects, including values and principles that gives meaning to success apart from the profit gained.
16. I may be accused of being old school but throughout my life, there is no other satisfaction in achieving something than through hard work.
17. I know nowadays, it is popularly promoted the narrative that one should not work hard but to work smart. Indeed, why should one work for 10 hours if the result can be achieved in half the time.

18. But such adage should be read alongside another adage – “easy come easy go” meaning what you achieve easily will also diminish easily.
19. Nothing beats hard work and the preparedness to roll the sleeve and to understand every levels of the venture.
20. Only then can we pursue perfection or at least strive towards that.
21. I have repeatedly expressed how impressed I am with the Japanese. It is not merely about their business and technological acumen but more so, their attitude and work ethics.
22. After the second world war, their economy was in shambles. In the book by Akio Morita, the founder of Sony, he recounted that in the aftermath of the war, the Japanese were willing to work for food when businesses were not able to pay them cash.
23. Today, of course, the Japanese are well paid but it is because they were willing to sacrifice and suffer through hard work in the early stages.
24. We are much more luckier in Malaysia today as we are not trying to rebuild from the destruction of war. The Government offers numerous support and incentives and all that is required is to take up these opportunities and put your heart and mind into it.
25. In fact, with all the incentives, training, funding and opportunities, it would be more difficult to fail than to succeed.
26. Personally, I am happy to see that in this programme, there are many businesses that started from very humble beginnings but have grown over the years to become established and solid enterprises. They would not have grown without the hard work and dedication of their founders and employees.
27. A key component to success be it in business or any other sector is to enjoy work. If you dedicate yourself to the job you undertake and take pleasure in things you achieve, then work gives you pleasure.
28. Again, from my own experience, I have never stopped working. In fact, I maintain the discipline of coming to the office early and leave in the evening because I enjoy working.

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29. Despite nearing the centenary, I find working contributing to my long life and keeping the mind active. I cannot imagine an idle life. Our brains are like muscles; if we don't use it, they will become weak.
30. Many of the successful business people I met over the years, Malaysian and foreigners alike - adopt the same attitude towards work: they enjoy doing the work.
31. One of the things that I pushed for when I was the Prime Minister the first time around was to instil confidence among Malaysians that we are no less than peoples from other nations.
32. The battle cry of Malaysia Boleh was intended to encourage Malaysians to venture beyond the traditional borders and far beyond.
33. From the late '80s onwards, Malaysian companies expanded far beyond our national borders, to countries like the UK, South Africa, and the Middle East, until today, it is no longer a rarity for a Malaysian firm to be successful in foreign markets.
34. With the right mindset and value system, along with hard work, there is nothing to stop the SMEs of today from spreading their wings to other countries. I believe a few of the companies represented here today have already achieved that.
35. What I have shared are just snapshots of what I believe can contribute to the success of your ventures. But each and everyone of you will have your own unique experience that defines your business and achievements.
36. But some basic values remain the same and they will continue to be the basis of your struggle in becoming successful.
37. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Affin Bank, Pernas and Ambank for sponsoring this programme. And I hope that the PLF SME Leaders Programme will inspire you further. I wish you every success.

Thank You.