

SPEECH BY MAHMOOD RAZAK BAHMAN
AT THE
PLF SME LEADERS PROGRAMME 2023
“Knowledge Exchange for Entrepreneurship Excellence”
21st JULY 2023

Salutations:

- a. YBhg Tan Sri Azman Hashim, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Perdana Leadership Foundation
- b. YBhg Tan Sri Nik Mohamed Nik Yaacob, Advisor, Perdana Leadership Foundation
- c. Puan Zarina Abu Bakar, CEO, Perdana Leadership Foundation
- d. Distinguished Sponsors and Representatives from, Ambank, MIDF, and Bank Rakyat
- e. Members of the Media
- f. Esteemed Speakers, Panellists, Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalamu’alaikum, salam sejahtera, and a very good morning to everyone present here today. It is an honour for me to be here as the representative of DRB-HICOM and to address this distinguished gathering.

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to YBhg Tan Sri Azman, Chairman of the Board of Trustees at Perdana Leadership Foundation, for inviting us to be a part of this significant event. I would also like to extend my appreciation to YBhg Tan Sri Nik, Advisor, Perdana Leadership Foundation, and Puan Zarina Abu Bakar, CEO, Perdana Leadership Foundation, for their invaluable contributions in organizing this program. In my role at the foundation, I must say that I have learned plenty from them in our many meetings and engagements as we pursue the aims of the foundation.

Today, we gather here with a shared purpose—to exchange knowledge, insights, and experiences that can empower and inspire entrepreneurs to navigate the challenges and seize the opportunities presented in today's dynamic business landscape. The topics and discussions lined up for today's program are both enlightening and engaging, covering a wide range of areas crucial to the success of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Listening to Tan Sri Azman Hashim's inspiring journey as an entrepreneur, I am reminded of the immense determination, resilience, and risk-taking spirit required to build a successful business. I am also reminded of the time when Tan Sri Azman founded the Malaysia South-South Association (MASSA) in the 90s, as YABhg Tun Dr Mahathir pursued collaborations with South America. My then employers, Amsbach Marine (M) Sdn Bhd were one of the founder-members of MASSA as our principals were in South America. That was one of my first exposures to Tan Sri Azman, and today, as I cooperate with him in PLF, I must say that his energy and verve has remained just as sprightly as it was some 30 years ago.

Tan Sri Azman's personal story can serve as an inspiration to all aspiring entrepreneurs in this room, myself included. It reinforces the belief that with passion, dedication, and the right support, one can achieve great heights.

DRB-HICOM has always been a firm supporter of the growth and development of the business community in Malaysia. We firmly believe that collaboration between the private sector, government, and organisations such as Perdana Leadership Foundation is vital for the sustained progress of our economy. It is through such partnerships that we can create a conducive environment for entrepreneurship to thrive and contribute to the nation's prosperity.

Furthermore, we recognise the significance of small and medium-sized enterprises in driving economic growth, fostering innovation, and creating employment opportunities. In Malaysia, SMEs play a pivotal role in our economy. They make up more than 90% of all Malaysian businesses and contribute almost 40% to the country's GDP. This sector, consisting of micro, small, and medium enterprises, employs more than 7 million people, providing livelihoods and opportunities for Malaysians across various industries and regions.

Thus, the entrepreneurial spirit showcased by the businesses represented here today plays a critical role in shaping the future of Malaysia. As sponsors, DRB-HICOM is proud to contribute to an event that provides a platform for knowledge sharing, networking, and the exchange of best practices.

The resilience and dynamism of the SME sector are evident in the countless success stories we see every day. It is the entrepreneurial spirit showcased by the businesses represented here today that plays a critical role in shaping the future of Malaysia. As sponsors, we are proud to contribute to an event that provides a platform for knowledge sharing, networking, and the exchange of best practices.

In today's ever-changing business landscape, staying ahead of the curve requires adaptability, embracing new technologies, and continuous learning. This event, with its focus on "Knowledge Exchange for Entrepreneurship Excellence," perfectly aligns with our vision. We firmly believe that by fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement, we can empower entrepreneurs to thrive amidst the challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the distinguished speakers and panellists who have graciously accepted the invitation to share their expertise and insights. Your presence and contributions today will undoubtedly enrich the knowledge and perspectives of everyone in attendance. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the organising committee for their meticulous planning and execution, ensuring the success of this program, including to my team at DRB-HICOM.

I must also acknowledge sponsors that are alongside DRB-HICOM, namely Ambank, MIDF, and Bank Rakyat, whose generous support has made this event possible. Your commitment to fostering entrepreneurship and driving economic growth is truly commendable. I would like to extend a special note of appreciation to EON Berhad for showcasing the all-new Proton X90 in the foyer, adding an exciting element to the event.

Last but not least, I want to thank each and every one of you present here today. Your active participation and engagement are vital to the success of this event. Let us make the most of this opportunity to learn, connect, and explore possibilities for collaboration and growth. Together, we can build a vibrant and resilient entrepreneurial ecosystem that propels Malaysia to new heights.

I wish all the participants a fruitful and rewarding experience at the PLF SME Leaders Programme 2023. May the knowledge gained, and the connections made during this event serve as catalysts for your future endeavours. Here's to the success of your businesses, the growth of the SME sector, and the overall prosperity of our nation.

Thank you.