

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY
YBHG TAN SRI AZMAN HASHIM, CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF TRUSTEES
PERDANA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION
AT THE
PLF SME LEADERS PROGRAMME 2023
“Knowledge Exchange for Entrepreneurship Excellence”
Thursday, 13th July 2023**

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Encik Mahmood Razak Bahman,

Director, Puspakom and

Alternate Trustee, Perdana Leadership Foundation

Puan Zarina Abu Bakar,

CEO, Perdana Leadership Foundation

Esteemed Sponsors and Representatives from DRB-Hicom, AmBank, MIDF and Bank Rakyat.

Members of the Media

Distinguished Speakers, Panellists,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- 1. Assalamu’alaikum, salam sejahtera, and a very warm welcome to everyone.
Thank you for being here at PLF on this Thursday morning.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- 2. Since the debut PLF SME Leaders Programme last year, Malaysia has been through a number of changes.**
- 3. Even though we have moved on from Covid-19 lockdowns, the economy faces new challenges. These include inflation and the corresponding necessary interest rate hikes, supply chain disruptions due in part to the protracted Russia-Ukraine war and US-China trade war, and the continuing breakthroughs in technology – especially in AI, with the unveiling of ChatGPT - which may mean that businesses that have not yet embraced digitalisation are in danger of being left behind.**

- 4. These issues have impacted Malaysian businesses in one way or another.**
- 5. Starting a business is always a risk but with risks come great rewards. The rewards are many, among them personal satisfaction, the independence to determine your own path, and also contributing to the Nation. Also remember you will not accumulate much wealth earning a salary!**
- 6. Businesses contribute to the national economy not just through the new products and services that they create but also through job creation, paying taxes, etc.**
- 7. The companies that are represented by today's speakers and audience collectively have created hundreds if not thousands of jobs for Malaysians. In fact, it's estimated that more than 7 million people are employed in the MSME sector in Malaysia.**
- 8. With the micro, small, and medium enterprises in Malaysia constituting more than 90% of all Malaysian businesses and contributing almost 40% to its GDP, it is important that this sector continues to grow year after year.**
- 9. How can micro, small and medium-sized businesses, including solo-preneurs, grow their business to become more resilient against shocks?**
- 10. Well, it takes a number of ingredients to become a business success, but leadership plays a key role. The owner/leader of every business decides on the vision, determines the direction, and plans and implements the actions of any enterprise. So, it's important that entrepreneurs stay connected to what's happening around them and remain open to new ideas and opportunities.**
- 11. This event today is meant to be a platform for entrepreneurs to engage and connect with one another as well as to highlight the best practices of established and new enterprises, with the understanding that the best learning comes from experience, whether it be one's own or another's;**

hence the tagline, “Knowledge Exchange for Entrepreneurship Excellence”.

12. This is our second SME event, thanks to the positive reception we had to our debut event last year.

13. Today’s programme promises to be both similarly enlightening and engaging. Through the dialogues and discussions, we hope that the programme will inspire new ideas, open up new directions, and maybe even lead to long-term business collaborations.

14. I thank the speakers who have accepted our invitation to share their perspectives and lessons learned, including our speaker from MATRADE who will speak on business expansion through e-Commerce.

15. I am also especially grateful to our Honorary President, former Prime Minister YABhg Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who has accepted our invitation and will deliver the Closing Address on Translating Vision in Action. You will get the chance to dialogue with him later this afternoon.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

16. This event would not have taken off without the generous support of our sponsors. A big thank you to DRB-Hicom, AmBank, MIDF, and Bank Rakyat.

17. Thank you also to the organising committee for realising this programme.

18. Finally, I thank YOU for being here.

19. Here is to a meaningful programme and to your business success.