

Zeti Akhtar Aziz: Bank Negara Malaysia LINK

Speech by Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz, Governor of the Central Bank of Malaysia, at the launch of Bank Negara Malaysia LINK, Kuala Lumpur, 25 February 2005.

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Yang Amat Berhormat Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Perdana Menteri Malaysia dan Menteri Kewangan Malaysia,

Tetamu-tetamu Kehormat,

Tuan-tuan dan Puan-puan,

The Central Bank engaging with the public is what Bank Negara Malaysia LINK is about. It is my great pleasure and honour to welcome you to the official launch of the Bank Negara Malaysia Laman Informasi Nasihat dan Khidmat or the Bank Negara Malaysia LINK.

The Bank Negara Malaysia LINK aims to enhance the effectiveness of Bank Negara Malaysia's interface with the public. Bank Negara Malaysia LINK is established as a centralised point of contact with the public on issues that relate to our operations, our policies, the financial sector and consumer education in the area of finance. We believe this continuous engagement with the public will not only enhance awareness, understanding and appreciation of the issues at hand but also contribute to facilitating the efficient functioning of the financial system and ensure the effectiveness of policy. Bank Negara Malaysia LINK will also centralise all interface with the SMEs on issues that relate to matters on access to financing and thereby contribute towards enhancing their value added to the economy.

Tuan-tuan dan Puan-puan,

Kami amat berbesar hati dengan kesudian Yang Amat Berhormat Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi untuk melancarkan Laman Informasi Nasihat dan Khidmat Bank Negara Malaysia atau Bank Negara Malaysia LINK pada hari ini. Kami mengambil kesempatan dari kehadiran Yang Amat Berhormat Dato' Seri di taklimat ekonomi di Bank Negara Malaysia pada pagi ini untuk merasmikan Bank Negara Malaysia LINK. Penubuhan Bank Negara Malaysia LINK merupakan komitmen Bank Negara Malaysia untuk meningkatkan lagi perkhidmatan yang diberikan kepada orang ramai dan membantu meningkatkan akses pembiayaan kepada perusahaan kecil dan sederhana. Perasmian ini amat bermakna kerana Yang Amat Berhormat Perdana Menteri merupakan peneraju kepada peningkatan sistem penyampaian sektor awam. Yang Amat Berhormat Dato' Seri juga telah memainkan peranan penting dalam usaha meningkatkan potensi perusahaan kecil dan sederhana sebagai enjin pertumbuhan ekonomi negara kita.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bank Negara Malaysia has always been in direct contact with the public. The Central Bank receives walk-in members of the public seeking information in relation to our operations, policies and regulations as well as those who seek redress on financial issues. The SME Unit in Bank Negara Malaysia also has direct contact with the SMEs relating to issues of access to financing. The establishment of Bank Negara Malaysia LINK is to allow the interface with members of the public as well as the SMEs to be centralised and conducted in a more efficient and effective manner.

The premises of the Bank Negara Malaysia LINK was previously the Kuala Lumpur branch of Bank Negara Malaysia. The Kuala Lumpur branch used to provide retail banking services to the Government as part of our role as banker to the Government. This role has now been transferred to banking institutions. It was also where currency was processed. This has also now been outsourced to MEPS Currency Management Sdn. Bhd. The branch premises is therefore now being transformed to a centralised service centre.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bank Negara Malaysia LINK will also provide support to the Bank's SME Special Unit in a number of areas associated with access to financing. The SME Special Unit was established within Bank Negara Malaysia almost two years ago. Initially, the functions of the SME Special Unit was to provide information on the various sources of financing available to the SMEs; facilitate the loan application process; and to provide advisory services relating to the financial requirements of SMEs. The role has subsequently been enhanced to monitor, coordinate and evaluate SME financing across all sectors, to

review policies to enhance access to financing and coordinate the implementation of all SME financing policies. In addition, the SME Special Unit also acts as the Secretariat to the Small Debt Resolution Committee, which facilitates the restructuring of non-performing loans (NPLs) of SMEs with on-going businesses. The SME facilities available at Bank Negara Malaysia LINK will greatly increase the outreach capabilities of the SME Special Unit.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the financial system becomes more developed and sophisticated, there needs to be increased financial literacy. As part of our Financial Sector Master Plan, we have implemented a 10-year programme to increase consumers' financial literacy. We are now in the third year of the programme. The effective participation by the public in the financial system needs to be an informed participation. There needs to be better understanding of the consumer's financial rights and responsibilities, the opportunities and the associated risks and costs.

Bank Negara Malaysia LINK through its exhibitions, interactive information kiosks and booklets, will serve as a channel to provide consumer financial education to the public. In this connection, Bank Negara Malaysia LINK will provide information relating to conventional and Islamic banking, insurance and takaful, SMEs, foreign exchange administration, Central Credit Reference Information System (CCRIS), Biro Maklumat Cek, development financial institutions, and other financing related matters. Bank Negara Malaysia LINK would also attend to public complaints on the above matters. As part of efforts to preserve the history on Bank Negara Malaysia's role in nation building, Bank Negara Malaysia LINK also includes a section on the Bank's contribution in shaping the country's economy and financial sector since the 1950s.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The establishment of Bank Negara Malaysia LINK takes the Central Bank's public outreach programme to a higher level. By providing a centralised platform for the public to seek information and address financial issues, it is our hope that Bank Negara Malaysia LINK will be instrumental in building bridges between consumers, including SMEs, the financial business community, consumer associations and policymakers. We believe in the importance of this outreach effort not only because the public has a right to an informed participation in their financial dealings, but also because it is also an important part of our collective and combined efforts that will determine the success of our endeavours.

Tuan-Tuan dan Puan-puan,

Akhir sekali, saya ingin mengucapkan berbilang-bbilang terima kasih kepada Yang Amat Berhormat Perdana Menteri atas kesudian beliau melancarkan Bank Negara Malaysia LINK.

Sekian, terima kasih.