



KEMENTERIAN  
PERDAGANGAN ANTARABANGSA DAN INDUSTRI

## **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**BY**

**YB DATO' SERI MOHAMED AZMIN ALI  
SENIOR MINISTER  
MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE  
AND INDUSTRY**

**ON**

**1ST EXPORT EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2021 WEBINAR  
“SHAPING THE FUTURE: BROADENING ECONOMIC  
NETWORKS AND OPPORTUNITIES”**

**15 DECEMBER 2020 (TUESDAY)  
ZOOM WEBINAR**

*[Recording session on 14 December 2020 (Monday),  
2.30pm at Parliament Building]*

**Dato' Fu Ah Kiow,**  
Chairman, Star Media Group

**Encik Abrar Anwar,**  
MD and CEO, Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia

**Puan Sharimahton Mat Saleh,**  
Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Exporters Development),  
MATRADE

Ladies and gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum w.b.t. and a very good evening.

1. First and foremost, thank you for inviting me to address this inaugural webinar for Export Excellence Awards (EEA). I am delighted to note that this is the second consecutive year this award is taking place and I applaud the joint initiative between Star Media Group, Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia and MATRADE in recognising Malaysia's exporters' contribution to the economy.
2. Exports of goods and services are critical to a country's economy as it spurs job creation, fosters economic growth and elevates market presence in the global arena. We know that exporting does not benefit only large companies but, importantly, also the Small and Medium Enterprises. They can ride on the value chain and reach out to new markets for expansion whilst benefiting from knowledge and technology transfer in the process.

3. Through this EEA webinar, I hope all of you joining us tonight will take advantage of the free educational series to chart and develop new strategies to access new markets and to remain competitive. I am sure the sharing sessions by the speakers will spark new ideas and inspire businesses to venture beyond their comfort zones in order to seek more global opportunities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

4. The international market is highly sophisticated and competitive. In order to excel in this market, exporters need to meet the international standards among other requisites. As the National Trade Promotion Agency, MATRADE's core services include assisting Malaysian companies in the areas of exporters' development, export promotion, trade and market insights and trade advisory.
5. MATRADE is tasked to assist Malaysian companies to sell to the world and connect foreign buyers to buy from Malaysia. With MATRADE's massive network of 46 offices in major commercial cities around the world, as well as at home, and reinforced with a multisectoral and global buyers' database, Malaysian companies especially SMEs have the opportunity to reach out to world markets.
6. In the recent update of Malaysia's trade performance, Malaysia's trade surplus in October 2020 has widened to RM22.12 billion, registering a double digit growth of 25.9% year-on-year and was the highest trade surplus

ever recorded for the month of October. Exports in the meantime reached RM91.05 billion in October 2020, increasing by 0.2% as compared to October 2019. This was the third highest export value recorded thus far. The expansion was supported mainly by higher exports to the United States, China, India and the United Kingdom. Imports totaled RM68.93 billion, decreasing by 6% while total trade was valued at RM159.98 billion, a contraction of 2.5%.

7. As announced by Bank Negara recently, the country's GDP in the third quarter of 2020 recorded a much smaller contraction, at -2.7 per cent, compared to the second quarter of 2020 which was at -17.1 per cent. This shows there is significant recovery in economic activities mainly due to reopening of the economy after the implementation of the Movement Control Orders and improved external demand factors. Further, it must be said that the economic stimulus measures that were introduced underscored two salient points: One, that the Government, being mindful of the severe economic impact of the pandemic, took swift, decisive and bold action by implementing the economic stimulus packages. Two, that the economic recovery measures were strategically targeted at the key sectors that would provide the necessary impetus to mitigate the repercussions and in turn boost recovery.

Ladies and gentlemen,

8. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is expected to boost Malaysia's economic revival to cushion the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. RCEP provides Malaysia's businesses access to a market of limitless possibilities whilst also serving to attract quality FDI. Altogether, the RCEP member countries have an estimated GDP of USD25.8 trillion, accounting for about 29 percent of the world's GDP and comprising 30 percent of the world's population. This makes RCEP the largest trading bloc in the world in real GDP terms.
9. The primary purpose of RCEP is to modernise and act as an overarching mechanism in synchronising Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) between the 15 countries. Specifically, RCEP brings together a harmonised set of rules and procedures pertaining to access to preferential tariffs across the region. It will also open doors for businesses to capitalise on opportunities that would lead to a broader spectrum of new markets.
10. Although tariff liberalisation has already progressed significantly among the 15 RCEP members over the past decade through a wide network of FTAs, RCEP is set to further reduce trade barriers. To enhance our competitiveness, Malaysia is committed to playing a more open game by leveraging on a higher gear in the big league, which will spur greater FDI from nations that are looking to generate synergies from this new pact.

11. Malaysian companies, especially SMEs, can also benefit from the advanced technical cooperation in digitalisation and smart manufacturing which will enable them in developing more innovative and competitive products. This would consequently strengthen supply chains, which as we know, have been savaged by COVID-19. Nevertheless, the pandemic has also forced entire industries to rethink and transform their global supply chain models for business continuity. Hence, migrating into digital supply chain networks from the traditional linear supply chain models has made all the difference in getting businesses to be better connected to their ecosystem.

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. I firmly believe that the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 coupled with the RCEP Agreement, would be able to deepen regional economic integration, bringing forth a vast array of multiplier effects. Both will be game-changers, tools to invigorate growth and will holistically serve to facilitate trade as well as attract even greater investments that is set to benefit the region as a whole.
13. The future of Malaysia's economic development lies in our hands. Let us all work together for the revival of our economy and to emerge stronger from this crisis.

14. In closing, I would like to congratulate everyone who is involved in organising this series of EEA Webinars. I wish all of you a fruitful and productive deliberation and success in your undertakings.

*Terima kasih* and stay safe.