

Sales of Mitsubishi FUSO up by 65 per cent

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● B4

Local SMEs urged to aim for professionalism

By Ghaz Ghazali

KUCHING: Local entrepreneurs, especially those under the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) bracket, should strive towards professional excellence through various programmes organised by government bodies such as the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (Miti).

Deputy Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Jacob Dungau Sagan said this, adding that SMEs currently comprises over 90 per cent out of three million active businesses registered under Companies' Commission of Malaysia.

"Miti has been given the task of providing various business development programmes, along with marketing activities, to boost the development of local SMEs in and out of the country. To this end, we've set up a number of partnerships with GLCs (government-linked companies) as well as our very own 'Groom Big' programme, in which we raise the profile of local SMEs by further improving the quality of their products and heighten their competitiveness in terms of exports," he told reporters after officiating at the 'Entrepreneur Symposium 2010' yesterday.

He added that presently, there are 960 companies listed on Bursa Malaysia with total market capitalisation amounting to RM1 trillion.

"These figures reflect the



IT'S OFFICIAL: Jacob hits the gong to mark the start of Entrepreneur Symposium 2010, as Hamad looks on.

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— Datuk Jacob Dungau Sagan, Deputy Minister of International Trade and Industry

positive progress on the development of entrepreneurs in Malaysia throughout the past five decades. In Sarawak, I see a lot of prospects for local operators to penetrate the overseas market. Take for instance, our very own 'kek lapis'. This is a very special product that is peculiar to Sarawak. With good branding and repackaging, it has the potential to gain widespread market share around the world. I may

not have the figures at hand now, but I believe a number of our very own homegrown entrepreneurs have their own presence in the global market," he commented.

The symposium, held in conjunction with Minggu Saham Amanah Malaysia (MSAM) 2010 at Wisma Bapa Malaysia's carpark in Petra Jaya, saw the participation of over 700 local entrepreneurs. The event was organised by

MSAM's key creator Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB) together with its investment arm Malaysian Industrial Development Finance Bhd (MIDF).

Meanwhile, PNB's president and chief executive officer Tan Sri Datuk Sri Hamad Kama Piah Che Othman said the group is still reiterating its role to encourage more shareholding in the corporate sector via unit trusts.

"Apart from this, our aim is to also provide ample opportunities to professionals to manage and administer bigger and more modernised enterprises. But we don't forget the SMEs. As such, we're called to set up a number of initiatives, even at a much smaller scale such as this one (the symposium) directed at SME operators. We hope that our small offerings will help in instilling and developing the culture of quality entrepreneurship among these local business operators," he explained.

On MSAM, Hamad stressed on the importance of raising public awareness on becoming investment-savvy.

"Since its inception over ten years ago, MSAM has managed to draw in about two million visitors from all walks of life. The aim of the programme is channel as much information as possible with regards to investments, particularly via unit trusts, as well as sound financial planning to Malaysians, so that they can make sound and informed judgement on their money going forward," he continued.



BRIEFING: Muhammad Naji al-Otari (second from right) listening attentively to Syrian Deputy Minister of Housing and Construction, Dr Kamal Al Sheikhah (right) on the sewage treatment plant during the launch

Weida transfers Malaysian wastewater technologies to Syria

KUCHING: Weida (Malaysia) Bhd (Weida) has successfully delivered its first sewage treatment plant (STP), Zabadani STP to Syria in a ceremony attended by Syrian Prime Minister, His Excellency Eng. Muhammad Naji al-Otari on April 15.

In its recent press release, it stated that the project saw a successful transfer of Malaysian technologies to Syria and customisation of Malaysian technologies into Syrian local conditions as well as the excellent technical performance of the plant.

Notably, the plant was completed in 18 months and was part of RM375 million contract awarded by the Syrian government through a government-to-government initiative to Weida in 2007 through its subsidiary, Renexus Weida Sdn Bhd (Renexus Weida).

The contract involves the

formulation of a sewerage master plan for a population of about four million and the building of five sewage treatment plants as well as 15 water treatment plants to serve a population of about one million from conceptualisation through to design, construction and commissioning on a turnkey basis.

The project, the first major one by a Malaysian company in Syria is a key cooperation between the Syrian Arab Republic and Malaysia and is partly funded by the Malaysian government through Export-Import Bank of Malaysia Bhd.

The completed Zabadani STP with the capacity to serve a population of 120,000 would be able to treat polluted wastewater in the Bludan Mountain, Masmakeh, Zabadani and Bukein with thousands of visitors who flock to

Bludan Mountain every year.

The launch of the plant has set a platform for both Syria and Malaysia to extend co-operation to build more sewage treatment plants on a fast track basis and also signifies effort towards other environmental initiatives while strengthening the great friendship, co-operation and bilateral ties between the two friendly countries.

Weida was expected to deliver another two sewage treatment plants, Hafier Foqa and Darayaa this year and Jamrayaa STP next year.

Currently, the group was negotiating for more projects in Syria, which includes a 30,000 cubic metre per day water reclamation plant, a 50,000 cubic metre per day centralised industrial wastewater treatment plant and more sewage treatment plants.

Halalsquare.com expands virtual market share of Islamic products

By Jerry Arickson

KUCHING: Pernec Corporation Bhd (Pernec) through its IT arm Pernec e-Biz Sdn Bhd is committed towards expanding the marketshare of shariah-compliant products via halalsquare.com, its online shopping portal.

Concurrently, it would also serve as a viable platform for local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to venture into online business, according to Pernec's group managing director, Abdul Karim Abdul Sallam.

"There's no initial charge for SMEs wishing to register with the portal. If there's no sales transaction, these merchants wouldn't need to disburse anything. In this respect, they won't incur any losses if they're not making any sale," he told The Borneo Post when met at Pernec's booth at Minggu

Saham Amanah Malaysia (MSAM) 2010 recently.

"Basically the concept of this portal is comparatively the same as any other online stores. The main difference is that we're very much focused on halal products. As long as their offerings are shariah-compliant, they can put their products for sale online, which would reduce their marketing costs. Upon confirmed sales transactions, we charge them accordingly with competitive rates that wouldn't hurt their bottomline," he related.

Currently, halalsquare.com showcases approximately 500 halal products on its virtual display, offered by about 70 companies already registered with the portal.

"By the end of this year, we hope to contract about 1,000 registered merchants. With more merchants registering with the site, we hope to lower our costs so we can be more competitive,"



INCREASED MARKET SHARE: Karim (left) says even merchants from abroad have perceived the prospect of halalsquare.com as a viable business platform, as Zoll lists out other offerings available within the portal.

said Karim.

When asked about prospects of online shopping business in the state, he highlighted that being online meant larger presence for SMEs not only in the

domestic market but internationally as well.

"Nonetheless, it's risky as we do see many online portals had to close down due to idleness. But halalsquare.com incorporates many activities

for SMEs and customers alike. We want to promote aggressive marketing. So far, response to our portal has been very encouraging, registering an average of 10,000 hits every month.

"Initially, halalsquare.com was established to target domestic SMEs. But now, even merchants from abroad have perceived the prospect of it. We recently had an Iranian company using our portal as a means to market its products. We also had demands from Paris for our products," he noted.

Meanwhile, Pernec's business manager for marketplace services organization, Zoll Koplee Baharom, mentioned that apart from marketing, halalsquare.com also provided delivery services via several agents nationwide and abroad.

"Once a transaction is sealed online, we instruct our delivery partners to courier

products to end-customers. As in other businesses, we charge our clients accordingly with very competitive rates. Some more, the advantage of ordering products online is that the price remains the same, regardless from where the customer is from."

"The portal also provides modules such as h-Discovery that supplies information, issues, awareness and knowledge related to halal products. In addition, h-Classified module is the classified listing of the community.

"Most notable is h-Shop, an online business platform for buyers, sellers, manufacturers, exporters and consumers to transact as well as h-Tunes, a place for downloading Muslim songs and music (nasyeed)," he added.

Concurring with Zoll, Karim agreed that this proved that halalsquare.com

had a bright growth potential as a halal centre for domestic and international market. In line with increasing awareness among SMEs as well as the public, the company planned to take a more aggressive stance in its marketing efforts, especially during MSAM 2010.

"Throughout MSAM, we managed to get 70,000 hits so far. As such, we'd like to encourage local SMEs from Sarawak to take this opportunity to register with us. This is a good way for them to market their product online, not only here but also throughout peninsular Malaysia and abroad. As business people ourselves, we will assist them with our range of services," he concluded.

Visitors can stop by at Pernec's halalsquare.com booth throughout MSAM 2010 at Wisma Bapa Malaysia's carpark in Petra Jaya until April 26.

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