

StarSpecial

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SOBA 2021

Eye on the nation's top businesses

This year's SOBA received overwhelming response from the best of the best in the local non-listed business community, as they rise above the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.



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Rising above challenges

Significant increase in number and diversity of SOBA submissions show local companies successfully weathering the Covid-19 storm

BEARING witness to the promising recovery of the nation's local non-listed companies, participation for this year's Star Outstanding Business Awards (SOBA) has more than doubled as compared to the previous year.

Not only has there been a 117% rise in total submissions for both tiers – Up to RM25mil and Above RM25mil – bumiputera submissions have also increased by nearly 150% from SOBA 2020.

Judges for SOBA 2021 have lauded not only the hybrid approach taken by the awards programme in facilitating judging for this year's submissions, but also the wide diversity of participants across differing backgrounds.

SOBA judges comprise professionals and key leaders from various business associations and organisations, as well as chambers of commerce,

National Tech Association of Malaysia advisor David Wong Nan Fay noted that the increase in submission figures for SOBA 2021 could point to companies seeking recognition as the economy increasingly opens up.

He opined, "The standards and benchmark have been set quite high this year, with quality content in the submissions for the innovation and best technology use categories.

"We're impressed with their performance during the pandemic and there were several outstanding submissions.

"We're also impressed that companies across different industries have totally shifted into digitalisation and that has made a great impact on their business growth and revenue."

Strong, quality participation

According to Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia treasurer and Small and Medium Enterprises Committee chairman Koong Lin Loong, entrepreneurs across different demographics and industries have excelled in bringing up their companies in terms of achieving success.

He shared, "When I read through the submissions, I realised that it wasn't their products or services that made their business a success.

"It was the entrepreneurs who made their products or services succeed."

In addition to bumiputera entrepreneurs, he also highlighted the increase in participation from women entrepreneurs.

"What's heartening to see is that there are more women entrepreneurs participating in SOBA this year, especially because the points they articulated to demonstrate their entrepreneurship are equally as powerful and compelling as their male counterparts.

"There was no such thing as success in certain industries, products or services, being confined to one gender," he said.

Persatuan Usahawan Maju Malaysia deputy national president Nelson Beh Chuen Hau added that this was a promising development, as the diversity and inclusion trend is becoming increasingly evident among smaller companies.

Moreover, he said that local companies are going beyond just offering their employees financial remuneration upon reaching their key performance indicators, by rewarding and retaining employees differently.

This includes focus on mentoring and leadership development, among others.

On the other hand, the Federation of Malaysia Chinese Commerce Association committee member Agnest Chan Wai Fong praised promising entries from younger and smaller companies that participated in SOBA 2021.

She said, "The younger, smaller companies are not necessarily strong in financial performance, but I salute their energy.



Official Virtual Launch



The official launch of SOBA 2021 was conducted virtually.



"Their passion and thirst for doing business really shines through as they really transform their businesses."

Adapting to the new norm

Even with its illustrious history, SOBA has never rested on its laurels as it adapts to the new normal, swiftly adopting technology and innovation in aligning with the changing business landscape.

In 2020, the awards programme introduced two new categories to better reflect the diversification of the country's SMEs, namely 'Best in Customer Service' and 'Best in Retail', in line with current trends in the business environment.

It further introduced an online submission feature and virtual judging, something that it also championed throughout the 2021 edition of the programme.

In SOBA 2021, however, this was further amped up as a response to judges' feedback, with a hybrid judging session that saw shortlisted finalists invited to present their submission to the panel of judges.

As the judges were able to engage in two-way communication with the participants, among the plus points they mentioned include better insight from the ability to clarify points in the participants' submissions or obtain supplementary



The SOBA awards programme has consistently improved itself with every edition. Pictured are the winners of SOBA 2020, which saw the introduction of an online submission feature and virtual judging.

information, which help validate the submissions.

Furthermore, SOBA continued to focus on upgrading the capabilities of local companies by conducting its Learn. Inspire. Build (LAB) knowledge-sharing and capacity-building workshops entirely online through a series of webinars.

This is the second year it has done so by featuring industry leaders and players to share business insights into not only alleviating challenges stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic, but also on how to establish structured continuity plans to ensure business sustainability.

The SOBA LAB series was also enhanced in terms of the languages it was presented in – namely in English, Bahasa Malaysia

and Mandarin – to reach out to a broader spectrum of SMEs.

Even so, recognising the importance of in-person networking, SOBA also organised SOBA Prestige while complying with government regulations and standard operating procedures.

The aim of SOBA Prestige was to bring together SOBA alumni, partners and sponsors with the aim of fostering a community of thought leaders, who will inspire people to scale their ideas into a sustainable reality.

Aside from networking, the event was also aimed at exchanging knowledge and experience in the business community.

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RHB wins top SME financing support award

IN a time when small and medium enterprises (SMEs) require financial assistance for growth more than ever, RHB Banking Group is among the top financial institutions that have taken the lead to ease access to financing.

By doing so, the group has been accorded the Top Performer Award by Syarikat Jaminan Pembiayaan Perniagaan Berhad (SJPP) for its strong support towards the growth of SMEs for 2021 – the fourth consecutive year it has achieved the recognition.

The award was given in light of RHB Banking Group's efforts in granting the highest amount of financing to SMEs under various government-guaranteed financing schemes administered by SJPP since 2018.

"This marks the group's fourth consecutive year to be given the Top Financial

Institution Award by SJPP, reflecting RHB's continued commitment and focus towards supporting the growth of the SME segment over the years," said RHB Banking Group's group community banking managing director Jeffrey Ng.

In 2021, the group facilitated a total disbursement of RM2.38bil, which represented the highest percentage of SJPP financing in that year.

RHB Banking Group has actively participated in SJPP's various initiatives since 2009 and over the past 13 years, it has assisted over 9,510 SMEs with total funding of more than RM8.83bil.

He added, "Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have taken a more integrated approach in providing assistance and support to our customers, in particular SMEs and businesses, which goes beyond repay-

ment assistance and financial relief facilities.

We have been working closely with our partners to enable SMEs to build financial resilience, and through initiatives such as our #JomSapotBeliLokal campaign, we are helping local SMEs to reach out to a wider audience at zero cost to them."

SJPP manages government guarantee schemes for SMEs, with the SJPP Government Guarantee serving as an alternative collateral.

It is designed to assist SMEs in recovering and revitalising their business operations through working capital injections and financing assistance.

(Right) Ng said that the group has taken a more integrated approach in providing assistance and support to its customers.



Growing from strength to strength

> FROM PAGE 2

SOBA has grown from strength to strength since Star Media Group Bhd first introduced the awards programme in 2010 to recognise the up-and-coming enterprises and their important role in driving Malaysia's economy.

In turn, their contributions help build the nation.

Through highlighting the country's deserving local non-listed companies, SOBA seeks to inspire and encourage local businesses to promote Malaysia and showcase their products and services to the world.

At the same time, this helps promote excellence and stimulate positive

competition.

SOBA serves as a benchmark for success to drive local businesses to achieve new milestones and push the envelope to achieve greater heights.

The awards has the following key objectives:

- > To recognise the role and contributions of outstanding businesses towards the nation and the economy;

- > To encourage local enterprises to continue developing and elevating their businesses;

- > To motivate and inspire home-grown businesses to aim for excellence in their products and services;

- > To celebrate and highlight the achievements of local enterprises that have con-

tributed to the growth of the community; and

- > To inspire and encourage local businesses to promote Malaysia and showcase its products and services to the world.

Since its inception, SOBA has honoured more than 350 companies.

Several past winners have even went on to become publicly listed, while many others chart a bold path of their own to set an example as impressive role models for others.

For more than a decade, the awards programme has firmly established itself as a credible and respected brand. Winning a SOBA award has become a distinct mark of honour and recognition for SOBA alumni through the years.

Most importantly, it stays true to its principles of upholding stringent independent judging to rightfully honour only the best of the best business champions in their respective areas of expertise.

SOBA 2021 is organised by SMG with CGC, Maxis, PKT Logistics Group and RHB as main sponsors and Matrade as official trade promotion partner.

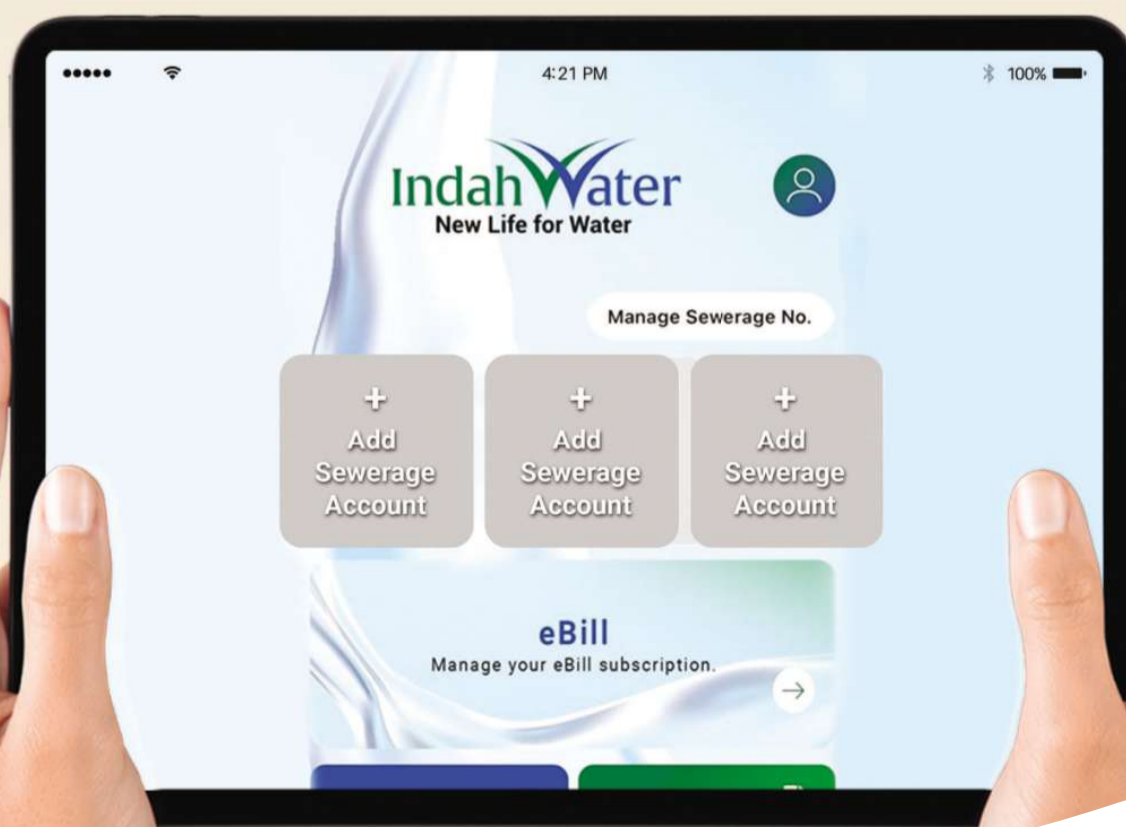
Supported by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry and Bursa Malaysia, it is audited by BDO with 988 and Suria as its official media partners.

For more information on SOBA, call SMG Events at 017-231 1789 or visit www.soba.com.my.

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Taking financing forward towards the era of digitalisation



Parkson Credit is constantly improving the customer service experience with a myriad of initiatives.

THE year 2021 marked another milestone for Parkson Credit as the homegrown company celebrated its seventh year in business.

Built upon the goals of enhancing user experience via digitalisation, technological adoption and innovation, the vision of its founder and executive director Danny Poh was to revolutionise the credit financing practice by shifting all facets of the business operations into the online ecosystem.

Road to digitalisation

"To us, innovation is paramount as it will eventually shape the future which is the best for the industry," Poh explained.

"The decisions we made back then, which led to who we are today, are a mixture of bold steps – breaking conventional practices and setting new trends."

By planting the digitalisation mindset throughout the organisation in the early stages, the company effectively spearheaded the development of its own proprietary web-based business system – IDEAL – which was able to move away from paper-based operations. The system was successfully launched in late 2014.

IDEAL is a full-fledged online assessment and collection system designed specifically for Parkson Credit dealers to speed up customers' application process while minimising usage of paper.

Users can monitor and receive updates of submitted cases as well as review its business performance via a dedicated dash-board module.

At the time of launch, Parkson

Credit was the first in the credit financing industry to pioneer this holistic digital ecosystem.

The fully automated solution is a gamechanger for dealers as the company reduced processing turn-around time significantly from days to hours.

At the same time, Parkson Credit can manage the whole operation with minimal manpower and resources – effectively growing business revenue while keeping human resources low.

Fast forward to today, further enhancements to the system allows dealers to conduct their own sales claim without interference or disruption at any time of the day, similar to a supermarket's self-checkout concept.

Since its commencement, the company has survived the challenges and continued to grow stronger with the implementation of technology and innovation in its daily operations.

Innovation played an important role in Parkson Credit's sustainability and operational agility. The company experienced minimal interruptions to productivity as employees are able to continuously work online from home during the pandemic lockdown in 2020.

Simply easy

Apart from empowering dealers through innovative and competitive edge tools, Parkson Credit is constantly improving the customer service experience with a myriad of initiatives such as digital touch-points and content on the website and AI enhanced WhatsApp services, as well as pioneering



Poh: 'To us, innovation is paramount as it will eventually shape the future which is the best for the industry.'

revolutionary products and services for customers to name a few.

IDEAL Care, an insurance product launched by Parkson Credit, is the first in the industry that includes credit protection against involuntary unemployment – ensuring customers' repayment obligations are unaffected should they face unforeseen joblessness in the short term.

Another groundbreaking entry is the Theft Loss Gap Benefit, which is offered free to all Parkson Credit motorcycle financing customers.

In the event of motorcycle loss due to theft, the benefit covers the "gap" – the difference between the

first-year sum insured and approved sum by the customer's comprehensive all-rider motor insurance policy, freeing policyholders from financial stress should they need to purchase a new motorcycle.

In addition, the company actively advocates the convenience of online banking to customers by encouraging the migration to online payment channels.

This proved useful during the 2020 pandemic which restricted movements.

"Our mantra 'Simply Easy' is vital to remind us that customers deserve the attention to detail, the

simplification of processes as well as the ease of enjoying our products and services," said Poh.

"We also play our part by educating our customers to get onboard with us on the digital roadmap. It serves to benefit all parties moving forward."

While Parkson Credit emphasised on improving the speed and sophistication of customer experiences, values such as care and empathy are equally important. As part of its corporate social responsibility, the company launched its support channels for customers facing Covid-19 as well as the recent flood related difficulties with "i-tolong".

Parkson Credit strongly believes technology will play the central role in setting the benchmark for efficiency and productivity in the credit financing industry, and will continue to explore and expand its services and product range.

"We are transforming into more than just a financing company as we strive to go beyond traditional financing by breaking boundaries while riding on existing technology. Going online presents a huge opportunity for us during this transformation phase as the stage is potentially limitless," says Poh.

"To us, it is not about embarking on a race to digitalise a company but rather to focus on getting the right technological trajectory to maximise the full potential of our business."

"With innovation in place, henceforth it should give the best value to our business partners and customers while staying ahead of the curve."



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A social enterprise programme, the Maxis Awards seek out visionary ideas from Malaysian heroes and collaborators to bring them to life.

Recognising Malaysian entrepreneurial initiatives

Maxis Awards lends a helping hand to boost the impact of local visionary ideas

CONTINUING in its efforts to bring about sustainable impact to the world, the Maxis Awards aims to recognise and support outstanding Malaysian entrepreneurial initiatives that contribute to driving positive impact to fellow citizens.

A social enterprise programme, launched in conjunction with Hari Kebangsaan and Hari Malaysia 2021, the awards seek out visionary ideas from Malaysian heroes and collaborators to bring them to life.

As such, Maxis has committed RM5mil worth of support to help develop and promote 12 winning projects over the course of the coming year, from the ideation stage to execution and marketing. The support includes:

- > Maxis Business solutions required for e-commerce, Internet of Things (IoT), cloud, voice and/or network solutions with technical expertise from Maxis

- > A financial grant to help cover the operational needs of the chosen initiative

- > Marketing and publicity through media and Maxis-owned channels to maximise the project's visibility

The first leg of the awards programme saw two green-themed business ideas – the Tropical Rainforest Conservation and Research Centre's Project Benih and Blue Bee Technologies' Project EARTH – topping the list with forward-thinking solutions towards nature conservation and environmental sustainability.

An initiative to mitigate the biodiversity collapse caused by forest loss witnessed across the world, Project Benih is leveraging Maxis' digital solutions to support its network of germination nurseries in bringing these trees from the rainforest to retail markets, supporting community-led restoration projects.

Project EARTH, on the other hand, is touted to be Asean's first on-demand electronic recycling solution

that capitalises on Maxis' technological and marketing capabilities to promote proper electronic recycling practices.

By offering cash or vouchers as a reward upon collection, it utilises a network of gig-economy freelancers to collect old, used or unwanted electronics directly from Malaysian households and businesses. These are then reused, repaired or recycled to maximise their value.

In its second batch, Maxis Awards is teaming up with credible national awards programmes such as the Star Outstanding Business Awards to create an 'award-within-award' to identify projects with the potential to deliver fresh, innovative ideas that are tech-enabled and can solve existing challenges – and in the long run bring about a lasting positive impact on the community, in order to create an impactful and sustainable programme.

"When we kickstarted the Maxis Awards, we wanted to find the best ideas and turn them into opportunities to create a long-lasting, positive ripple effect on the nation. We were also hopeful that the awards could bring to life our 'Always Be Ahead' brand promise.

"In this leg of the awards, we continue to be inspired by the creativity and innovation of Malaysian entrepreneurs in pursuing their passion projects to change their communities for the better," said Maxis brand and marketing head Tai Kam Leong.

Enterprises were invited to

submit a business idea, detailing its goals, mechanics and feasibility, along with the impact that it hopes to bring to the community. They were also required to provide a three-minute introductory video about the team spearheading the project as well as background information on the community whose issue they targeted to solve.

Following a month-long submission process, finalists were then invited to pitch their ideas to a panel of Maxis judges.

Winners were then selected based on three key criteria, namely value to community, freshness of the idea in reflecting a 'new and better' theme, as well as tech-enabled. The third criteria, in particular, required finalists to demonstrate how the business idea presents a purposeful, future-forward use of Maxis' network connectivity and/or digital solutions.

The finalists for round 2 of the Maxis Awards, who shared their experiences on participating in the awards programme, include:

- > HZ Green Pulp Sdn Bhd: A Perak-based leading manufacturer of moulded paper pulp products, made from 100% recycled paper.

"The Maxis Awards has given us enthusiasm and a boost to further extend our resources, obligation and contribution to the community and society's wellness.

"It not only raised awareness on the importance of a clean environment through our efforts, but also on improving health and better liv-

ing in our community," said its chief executive officer (CEO) Datuk Dr Donald Yap.

- > In-Source Options: An organisation specialising in competency training and assessment, as well as research and development in the field of occupational safety and health, with a special focus on heavy machinery and vehicles.

In-Source Options director Lt Colonel Frank Tan said, "Maxis Awards is a catalyst that empowers the Community through Activation of heroes using Technological Advancement by Leading and Yielding Synergy for a Thumbs-up result."

- > Playfit: A boutique personal training studio that provides and facilitates holistic, multi-faceted fitness.

Playfit co-founder Toh Yen Kee said, "Commit to something bigger than yourself. I was keen to participate in the Maxis Awards because of its focus on how our business can create value for the community (environment, society and business ecosystem) through newer and better ways enabled by technology.

"This is aligned with our values and mission to make fitness a sustainable lifestyle for our community."

- > SEAD Industries: An impact enterprise that provides building design and environmental consultancy services through SEAD Build, designing and constructing bamboo buildings.

"As the trend toward alternative, renewable materials ramps up, we are working to elevate bamboo – found abundantly in Malaysia – into an agent against climate change. We are very selective with the bamboo that goes into our building materials, which is why we need to ensure our harvesting communities have what they need to deliver.

"By putting technology into their hands, we make their jobs easier, increase their productivity and improve their livelihoods. We also plant bamboo to capture carbon and restore degraded lands in Malaysia and IoT-enabled agro-technology will be a key part of that solution," said SEAD founder and executive director Lucas Loo Ze-Xian, as well as co-founder and design head Hua-Jie Toh.

- > Viva Odyssey Sdn Bhd: An international award-winning company and a leading provider of safety technology and integration systems, which reduce workplace accidents globally.

Its CEO Jerryson Abraham Doss said, "The Maxis Awards reminded us that there isn't an idea too small or not worthy of an opportunity to grow and blossom.

"The greatest ideas are those who are daring enough to think of it and insane enough to pursue it and crazy to achieve it!"

For more information on Maxis Awards, visit <https://www.maxis.my/awards2021>.



(from left) HZ Green Pulp's Yap, In-Source Options' Tan, Playfit's Yen Kee, SEAD Industries' Loo and Viva Odyssey's Jerryson.

Riding on the wave of recovery



HEARTIEST congratulations to all The Star Outstanding Business Awards 2021 (SOBA) winners! Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of Malaysia's economy, representing 97.2% of the overall domestic business establishments.

Credit Guarantee Corporation Malaysia Berhad (CGC) is honoured to be part of SOBA for the seventh running year, participating as one of the Main Sponsors of this award. SOBA recognises Malaysian MSMEs' unswerving strength and perseverance rising above challenging circumstances, as MSMEs rebuild and reinvent their businesses to remain viable in the pace of the Covid-19 economic and health crises.

The year 2021 was another challenging one where many MSMEs worked hard to recover from the downturn brought on by the pandemic, not forgetting the MSMEs that were also affected by the flood at the end of the year. CGC as always was steadfast in assisting MSMEs and availed guarantees amounting to over RM10 billion to businesses affected, enabling them to rebuild and revive. CGC also participated in the Targeted Relief and Recovery Facility by Bank Negara Malaysia. To enable MSMEs to sustain their business operations, CGC also availed its Targeted Repayment Assistance programme.

Last December during the flood, CGC swiftly aided its affected MSMEs, offering them the BizBina-i financing. This scheme alleviated MSMEs' financial burden, assisting them to sustain their business operations which were further challenged by the natural disaster. CGC participated in the government's RM500 million Disaster Relief Fund, providing guarantees to MSMEs and assisting them to secure financing assistance from various financial institutions.

CGC is optimistic that 2022 will bestow brighter prospects for the economy, propelling the revival of our MSMEs. The Malaysian economy rebounded by

3.6% in the fourth quarter of 2021. The growth momentum is expected to continue in 2022, underpinned by expansion in both private and public sectors as well as the acceleration of the Covid-19 booster vaccination programme.

The Malaysian economy is expected to grow between 5% to 5.8% this year, as forecasted by various financial institutions including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

CGC will continue to drive the financial inclusion agenda, partnering MSMEs as they reinvent and revitalise their businesses to adjust to the new normal. Anchored by our Five-Year Strategic Plan (2021-2025), CGC will continue to be the catalyst of growth for MSMEs across life stages, offering them end-to-end holistic support - both financial and non-financial assistance.

In 2022, CGC will focus on further improving operational readiness and efficiency, continuing support of MSMEs' rehabilitation and beyond, intensifying developmental roles via financial and non-financial support, enhancing guarantee schemes to include alternative financiers, and supporting the sustainability agenda.

With the evolving needs of MSMEs, CGC is diligently aligning our products and services to support MSMEs.

CGC has committed to its mandate valiantly for the past 50 years, having availed over RM86.6 billion to over 508,000 accounts. On 5 July this year, CGC will be celebrating its 50th anniversary and we remain steadfast in our pursuit to be the Partner for MSME Growth Across Life Stages of the MSMEs.

Once again, heartiest congratulations to all SOBA 2021 winners.





The first SOBA 2021 virtual judging session was held virtually on Jan 6, 2022.



The second round of judging for SOBA 2021, held on Jan 14, was a hybrid session that saw both physical and virtual judging.



Star Media Group Bhd (SMG) group CEO Alex Yeow (fourth from left) and chief business officer Lydia Wang (seventh from left) take a commemorative photo with (from left) RHB's Yip, CGC chief business officer Leong Weng Choong, Carlsberg Malaysia corporate affairs director Pearl Lai, Sime Darby Motors Retail and Distribution Malaysia managing director Jeffrey Gan, Maxis SME head Kevin Lee and PKT Logistics Group chief marketing officer Kuan Eu Jin at SOBA Prestige.

This year, a special virtual SOBA LAB that shed light on post-Covid-19 lifestyles was also held, featuring (clockwise from left) TV host and entrepreneur Naz Rahman, CGC bumiputera development and products senior vice president Mohamed Azman Mohamed Taufik, Maxis Southern SME sales head Hirman Mohamad Soh, Malay Chamber of Commerce Malaysia vice president Amirhamzah Karim and Robopreneur Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Dr Hanafiah Yusoff.

Kelangsungan Kehidupan Ancaman atau Peluang?

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Facilitating networking, enabling knowledge

The Star Outstanding Business Awards (SOBA) 2021 programme utilises a hybrid approach to linking local entrepreneurs and non-listed companies both online and offline for a meaningful year of networking and learning, which culminates in the March 24 SOBA Gala Night at One World Hotel, Petaling Jaya.

Photos: AZMAN GHANI, IZZAFIQ ALIAS, LOW LAY PHON and GLENN GUAN/The Star



(From left) SMG's Wang, Malaysia Retail Chain Association (MRCA) deputy president Dato Liew Bin, MRCA president Shirley Tay, SMG's Yeow, MRCA past presidents Datuk Seri Garry Chua and Datuk Seri Nelson Kwok, SMG chief content officer Esther Ng and MCRA vice president Ken Phua at the MRCA CEO-Get Together.

在现金流危机中倖存下來 及 业务连续性计划

Kevin Lee
Maxis Business

Pang Kong Chek
PKT Logistics Group Sdn Bhd

Yip How Nang
RHB Bank Berhad

(From left) 988 announcer and celebrity entrepreneur Chan Fong, Maxis' Lee, PKT Logistics Group chief financial officer Pang Kong Chek and RHB's Yip How Nang share insights on how small companies can embed sustainability into their businesses.



The Jaguar Land Rover Defender was also unveiled during SOBA Prestige.

Star SOBA 2021
STAR OUTSTANDING BUSINESS AWARDS

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Organiser: Star Media Group
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The eye-catching outfits of the attendees at the MRCA CEO-Get Together lent a festive atmosphere to the gathering.



RHB's Yip (centre) with SME business development head Keith Choo (left) at SOBA Prestige.



Maxis' Lee (second from left) and SME sales head David Yong (second from right) with their team at SOBA Prestige.



PKT Logistics Group's Kuan (right) together with communication and branding head Jaqueline P'ng Rea Naa (second from left) and their team during SOBA Prestige.



CGC's Leong (left) and Hoh (right) with the team at SOBA Prestige.

Gearing up for impact

WHILE the economy is seeing signs of improvement and many businesses have weathered the Covid-19 storm, the year ahead could still be a challenging one, due to both internal and external factors.

For one, the recent issue relating to the upcoming implementation of the RM1,500 minimum wage from May 1 is a pressing worry for Malaysian businesses, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Business associations are urging the government to reconsider the immediate increase of the minimum wage, but instead implement it incrementally.

FMM president Tan Sri Soh Thian Lai pointed to the findings of the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM)-Malaysian Institute of Economic Research Business Conditions Survey for the second half of 2021 – conducted between Jan 5 and Feb 10 – as a reflection of the voice of businesses.

In the survey, the majority of the respondents agreed that given the current business landscape, an RM100 increase in the minimum wage is acceptable.

He said, “FMM has proposed to the government for the minimum wage adjustment to be implemented gradually with a RM100 increase in the third quarter of 2022 and a subsequent adjustment in 2023/2024 to reach RM1,500.”

He added that employers are continuing to plan for salary increments in 2022, which would further address pressure arising from the rise in the cost of living.

Presenting a different point of view is SME Association of Malaysia president Ding Hong Sing,



The Malaysian economy is slowly recovering, but businesses warn that a sudden increase in the minimum wage could have a negative impact.

who believed that as most Malaysians are already earning more than the RM1,500 minimum wage, those who will benefit are foreign workers.

Uncertain outlook

This new challenge comes on the back of improved business confidence in Malaysia in the first quarter of 2022.

Previously, the Department of

Statistics Malaysia reported that business sentiment had rebounded to a positive trajectory, with a confidence indicator of 7.6%, for the first time in more than nine past quarters.

At the time, its chief statistician Datuk Seri Mohd Uzir Mahidin said that among all of the surveyed sectors, the services (11.1%), industry (12.2%) and wholesale and retail trade (4.0%) sectors expect better business performance in

the first quarter of 2022.

The construction sector, meanwhile, continues to be pessimistic on its business performance with the confidence indicator at -40.4% in the first quarter of 2022.

That said, not all is doom and gloom as business groups believe that the property sector will see a boost as Malaysia plans to reopen its international borders.

Opening up borders would encourage the influx of expatriates

into the country in addition to tourists, who will stay for a longer term and rent or possibly buy properties here, said Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia SMEs committee chairman Koong Lin Loong

“The property sector consists of multiple sub-sectors and the re-opening of borders would create a chain effect that will stimulate the whole sector again,” he said, adding that it would further strengthen the confidence of foreign investors in the country by improving the ease of doing business.

Malay Chambers of Commerce Malaysia president Abdul Halim Husin shared the chamber's hope that the transition to endemicity will aid in the country's economic recovery, particularly in tourism and hospitality.

Removing the limits of operation hours will improve the attractiveness of foreign visitors, as he said, “As the border reopening is aligned with the abolition of the operating hours by premises, it would help in promoting the food culture in Malaysia.

“Not only among the locals, but also towards the foreign visitors especially in some states such as Penang and Melaka.”

He further said that the move would also help in addressing the lack of job opportunities, as more businesses – especially those in the food and beverage sector – can operate past midnight.



WF Machinery & Hardware Sdn. Bhd.

FOUNDER : Bryant Yew

Established in 2018, WF is a trading company supplying light machines such as **agricultural equipment, construction tools, power tools** and **household products**. We provide after sales services. We are dedicated to providing premium physical products and trading services by epitomising safety and efficiency.

 wfmalaysia.com.my

 facebook.com/wfmachinery

 011 - 6282 0104



Semenyih, Headquarters

No. 27, Jalan Seremban, 43500 Semenyih, Selangor.



Ecohill Semenyih Outlet

No. 16-1, Jalan Ecohill 1/5A, Setia Ecohill, 43500 Semenyih, Selangor.



Wellous's functional food products are driven by innovative technologies.



Products are carefully tested, documented and reported through clinical trials.

Elevating personal health with innovative functional food

WELLOUS Sdn Bhd, a homegrown personalised functional food company, is on the move to serve smart and health-conscious consumers who are always on the lookout for products of the best quality.

Made out of world-class patented ingredients, Wellous's functional food products are driven by innovative technologies that retain its active compounds and ingredient purity to ensure maximum product effectiveness. Every globally sourced ingredient is screened through strict lab examinations, giving it a competitive edge to be a class above in the industry.

All products are also manufactured in a closed practice system that prevents environmental contamination and assures its finest quality. Products are carefully tested, documented and reported through clinical trials under stringent quality controls.

"We are more than ready to meet the high growth demand for functional foods, which will be the next future food," said Wellous chief executive officer Racheal Tan.

There is more to Wellous's functional food products that meet the eye – the key of it being 'personalised'. The 12 product range series targeting various market segments aim to solve and support health needs concerning customers from different walks of life.

An elaborate network of systems and software are at work to keep the pulse on this community. Wellous utilises technology-gear relationship management system to manage and provide better customer experience, including handling enquiries from customers relating to health and products. Each enquiry is accessed and addressed by a team of nutritionists and medical doctors under the umbrella of Wellous Medical and Research Board of Advisors (MRBA).

Wellous is set to be a trendsetter in making functional food as part of personalised nutrition, so that self-care for one's wellbeing can be effortlessly integrated into their current lifestyle.

In line with this, Wellous offers a wide range of innovative functional food products. Some bestsellers include Liveon, an anti-glycation botanical beverage that is made out of four international patented ingredients. One of its main ingredients is the New Zealand pine bark extract, which is very high in



Each enquiry is accessed and addressed by the Wellous Medical and Research Board of Advisors (MRBA).

antioxidants and scientifically proven to reverse cell ageing.

The product that is currently in high demand is Tiger Milk King mushroom extract, the first product of its kind that comes in liquid form and ready for immediate consumption on the market.

A national treasure that can only be found on our own soil, Tiger Milk King helps in boosting our immune and respiratory system.

As Wellous believes that quick results do not need to cost your health, Zenso, their newest weight management product line, features a tried-and-tested Japanese traditional weight-loss ingredient.

The key ingredient, Kurozu black vinegar, is processed through the latest Japanese technology, a product designed to fit the modern folks' eating habits and lifestyles.

That combined with cutting-edge food technology allows users to manage their weight safely, scientifically, and effectively within a month.

A lot of work is still needed to educate Malaysians on health benefits relating to functional foods.

To realise these efforts, Wellous has drawn up a series of collaborative projects to work with government agencies to create health awareness and eventually build up a society that cares about physical and mental well-being.

"We are also working with universities locally to offer graduating students the opportunity to work in our company. To this end, we will be signing a memorandum of understanding with some universities to benefit more people in our ecosystem. With our community-driven research and development methods, we can support student learning and provide materials for research," remarked Tan.

Simplicity is the key to speed – Wellous applies the use of data tracking at every step of the product development cycle to create competitive products that meet or even exceed customer expectations. By that, its in-house-developed external hybrid app manages its business operations from all over the world.

The easy-to-use interface allows the control of order placements, integrated logistic facilities, automated shipment, and team management in just a few taps.

This is Wellous doing its part as a homegrown brand in giving back to Malaysians.

With its focus on leveraging on the latest innovations and technologies to enhance the consumer experience, Wellous is set to enter a future where technology can work seamlessly in the plan of bringing in more health products for the benefit of all Malaysians.



Wellous chief executive officer Racheal Tan.

Bringing premium frozen food to your doorstep

AT the end of a busy and hectic workday, all you might want to do is come home to a hot meal.

While ordering in take-out could be one way to feed yourself and your family, sometimes the home-cooked route just hits the spot.

Instead of toiling away in the kitchen making a meal from scratch, or even spending hours of your time on weekend meal planning, the fuss-free way could just be at the frozen food section at the supermarket.

And beyond convenience, you would want to purchase your food from a brand you trust.

For over two decades since 1996, Kanika has aimed to prioritise supplying premium-quality frozen food at a reasonable price, while ensuring it lives up to its core value of excellence and credibility.

With a wide selection of premium quality frozen food, Kanika has many offerings, which includes frozen seafood, Japanese food, Western food, surimi steamboat products, beverages and premium desserts.

The quality of products is maintained by specifically sourcing, producing and packaging frozen foods following Kanika's strict requirements from all over the world, with some 20 countries under its belt such as France, Belgium, Norway, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Vietnam and Thailand among others.

Well known on a regional level within Malaysia and South-East Asia, Kanika uses its warehouse capacity of some 6,000 metric tons to store its goods.

Meanwhile, the brand is able to



distribute its frozen foods using its own cold logistics fleet of 21 frozen trucks and has a widespread number of resellers with over 1,000 premium retail outlets to boot.

But just as with most businesses, the brand was faced with challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic brought on. The company saw an opportunity to make a switch online and took it.

It quickly transitioned from its traditional method of commerce to the e-commerce platform and developed two websites to overcome movement restrictions like physical visits to offline stores: Kanika official website for end-users and Kanika B2B (business-to-business) for businesses.

Kanika aims to provide the fastest and convenient mode of getting its customers frozen food via online purchase and managed to kick-start its online wholesale over the duration of just five months.

Currently, Kanika's official website averages 5,000 website traffic per month and some 20,000 followers on social media.

Meanwhile its B2B online platform comes equipped with a mobile app, Kanika Biz, which aims to provide greater convenience to existing business customers.

The brand is quick on its feet and able to adapt to the use of technology swiftly, which has been a great asset that the company can leverage, while simultaneously adding a competitive edge over its competitor.

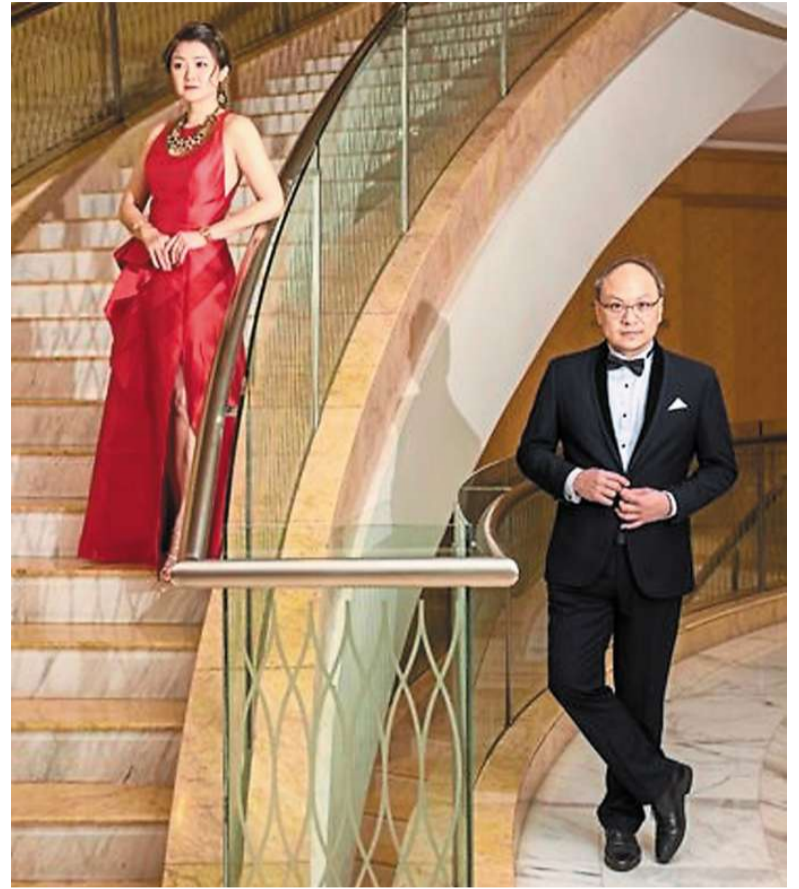
This is made possible with its creative use of technology and showcasing its products to a wider audience, all while managing to retain existing customers.

For instance, Kanika took to social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram to build awareness of its frozen foods, as well as participating in marketplace platforms such as Grab, Lazada and Shopee.

It has also engaged with well-known influencers like Cik B and Chef Nik Michael to gain exposure through a 30-day live cooking show known as *Dapur Kaw Kaw Selebriti*.

Kanika plans to sustainably maintain its competitiveness through the digitalisation of the company within the next five years, starting with the use of e-commerce and social media platforms as a tool for sales and marketing.

Furthermore, with its recent success in digitalisation, Kanika aims to expand the process to other areas within the business such as operations and financial tools by considering the use of enterprise resource planning and warehouse management systems.



Kanika chief executive officer Vinnie Ang Seyok Hoon (left) and executive chairman Philip Goey Soon Loong co-founded Kanika.

Armed with stellar quality products and business acumen, Kanika has also received accolades over the years such as the 2009 Golden Bull Awards, 2010 and 2011 Thailand Thai Best Friend (TBF) Awards and 2014 Sin Chew Business Excellence Awards among

others, as well as nominated for the 2021 Super Golden Bull Awards.

■ For more information, visit its official website www.kanika.com.my or if you are a business owner, visit kanikab2b.com.my

Leading the way in holistic water management

CLEAN water is as necessary to human beings as breathing, which is why Ranhill Water Technologies (RWT) seeks to improve the quality of life for communities by advocating better water management.

RWT, a subsidiary under the engineering division of Ranhill Utilities Bhd, is a provider of holistic solutions for water, wastewater and reclaimed water processes and technologies through engineering, operations and management expertise, financing, as well as project management including integration of technologies to fit client needs.

Established in 1994, RWT has almost 30 years of experience in its industry in undertaking various water, wastewater and reclaimed water utility projects across different sizes, locations and project complexities in Malaysia, Thailand and China.

To date, RWT operates 22 water, wastewater and reclaimed water treatment plants on a build-operate-transfer or a rehabilitate-own-transfer business model, said its chief executive officer Tin Wai Han.

Among its recent achievements include being the first local contractor to successfully secure and develop Malaysia's colossal Forest City project, via the design and construction for sewage treatment plant (STP) by Country Garden Pacific View Sdn Bhd (known as STP 4); as well as the construction of the Sembrong Barat water treatment plant (WTP), which was recognised as the Best WTP by the Malaysian Water Association (MWA) in 2019.

At the same time, it does not



RWT constructed the Sembrong Barat WTP, which was recognised as the Best WTP by MWA in 2019.

neglect its corporate social responsibilities, as it also has community outreach initiatives to provide clean water supply services via Mobicell portable WTP to communities suffering from the aftermath of natural disasters. These range from earthquake victims at Palu, Indonesia to flood victims at local communities, including in Hulu Langat, Selangor; Bentong, Pahang; Kuala Nerus, Terengganu; Yan, Kedah.

Despite the challenges arising from Covid-19, RWT rose to the challenge to adopt various contingency measures to deal with sluggish demand for wastewater and reclaimed water during the height of the pandemic.

"These included reviewing manpower requirements and supply chain structure to unlock efficiencies and strengthening the business continuity plan towards enabling continued operational productivity

amidst the new normal," he said, adding that these were among the measures that have enabled RWT to maintain a high level of operational effectiveness to continue meeting client benchmarks.

That said, he stressed that as water supply dwindles due to climate change, there is an ever-increasing and challenging task to keep pace with the rapidly rising demand for water, in addition to rising costs of development and the more complex management of water supply services.

He said, "The use of reclaimed water provides a potential solution to the issue and an alternative source of water that can be used in commercial and industrial operations. Reclamation technologies developed are also suited to the needs of developing countries, which have a growing need for the supplementation of freshwater resources."



RWT aspires to be one of the biggest water technology providers in the region, said Tin.

In Thailand, RWT is responsible for designing, building and operating two water reclamation treatment plants in Amata City Rayong to supply industrial grade water to the entire industrial estate.

The reclamation plants are also part of the industrial estate's effort towards a 'zero discharge' water treatment system.

"RWT sees the benefit in reuse as a backup for drought, sustainability and resiliency. Considering that water is a finite resource, it is imperative to recycle the water from industrial wastewater to the appropriate standard for the application," he stressed.

Tin said that RWT is capable of sustaining its businesses by constantly improving and expanding its deliverables to cast a wider reach across Asia, as it aims to be an industry-acclaimed leader in providing the most efficient and transformative technology solu-

tions to improve communities' quality of life.

It has thus adopted a circular economy approach that drives it to integrate sustainability within its business strategies and operations towards creating further positive, economic, environmental and social impact for stakeholders.

He concluded, "We are seeking to leverage our considerable experience, expertise and management skills to assist Malaysia and other suitable localities within the region, in transforming the key sector into world-class performers in time."

"RWT aspires to be one of the biggest water technology providers in the region. The complex and large issues faced are intertwined with tremendous opportunities and vast potential."

"Thus, this drives us to fully embrace the challenges and deliver solutions that offer a better, more sustainable world for various stakeholders."

WHEN the pandemic hit hard in 2020, for weeks you could rarely find any face masks. As the supply trickled in, many face masks were terrible and were sold at exorbitant prices.

That is when Neutrovis was born. The brand quickly produced a medical-grade face mask that was comfortable and affordable.

Originally focused on beauty and healthcare products, the company leveraged their existing relationship with pharmacies, retail and other distribution channels to get these precious items into the hands of Malaysians.

The brand quickly diversified its offering by producing disinfectant sprays, anti-bacterial wipes and much more. Neutrovis has become one of the leading brands of face masks, thanks to the support and trust of Malaysians.

In the spirit of giving back, Neutrovis kickstarted its community efforts through various corporate social responsibility activities. They supported frontliners, local Paralympians in Tokyo and other organisations.

By the end of 2021, Neutrovis had given back over six million face masks to those in need.

Face mask furor

Touted as the face masks for trendsetters, with Neutrovis, you can say goodbye to boring, mundane face masks and say hello to superior protection with style.

The brand's most popular products are the four-ply medical face mask and KF94 respirator. Both combine the best available melt-blown filter (≥98% bacterial and particle filter efficiency for KF94, ≥96% bacterial and particle filter efficiency for four-ply) with a super soft inner layer it is gentle on skin.

Superior medical mask to superior protection solutions



The face masks and respirators are CE certified and approved by the Medical Device Authority Malaysia.

The mask and respirators use ultra-gentle earloops to allow long wear without discomfort.

What does the future hold?

As Malaysia emerges from a pandemic into an endemic phase, infections remain high, but restrictions are softening.

People are gathering in malls, conferences, and festivities that were once considered illegal and dangerous. But what does that mean for Neutrovis, who had built their business around providing essential items for Malaysians?

Introducing Superior Protection Solutions

Knowing that the Covid-19 virus is transmitted through the air, surfaces and from human to human, Neutrovis is releasing innovations that specifically make the air, surfaces and humans safer.

Its air purifier system cleanses and freshens air for homes and enterprises.




For surfaces, aside from surface disinfectants, they are producing an item that can coat surfaces and effectively kill germs for years.

And by producing personal care products such as soaps, and sanitizers that are gentle on the skin but tough on germs and viruses, Neutrovis aims to make human contact safer.

It is a big vision, but this little Malaysian company believes it is worthwhile.

■ For more information, visit www.neutrovis.com or scan the QR code.



Solar energy towards sustainable living

COMMITTING to a mission to make the world a better place, Verdant Solar ventured into the renewable energy industry in 2013.

Since then, it has risen to become a leading residential solar solution company in Malaysia, having captured approximately 8% market share.

Verdant Solar's ultimate purpose is to build a Malaysia that embraces sustainable living to revolutionise the lives of the people, and make the world a better place together.

Led by founder and chief executive officer Zeth Lim, Verdant Solar aims to be the most trusted solar home provider in South East Asia.

"Customer happiness is always our top priority. We have a proven track record as can be seen from our Google reviews and continuous referrals given by our customers. Verdant is a brand that promises to deliver the highest quality and give peace of mind to our clients throughout their journey with us," says Lim.

"Our promise is peace of mind for solar home owners, fast installation, quality assurance and an easy to reach customer experience team."

Solar Home has a 25-year warranty cycle, so it is important to find a reliable and supportive solution provider.

To provide this assurance to customers, each Verdant Solar customer is assigned a dedicated customer experience specialist to ensure queries and issues are resolved within the shortest time frame.

Also, the company commits to a 30-day speed guarantee, whereby installation will be done within 30 days upon signing up, or else



Customer happiness is paramount at Verdant Solar.

Verdant will pay your electric bill.

"These are our efforts to provide peace of mind to our customers, and we hope more homeowners will jump on the bandwagon in living sustainably," says Lim.

How Solar Home helps customers

During MCO, the electricity bills for Nor Azman Mokta's household were much higher than usual, as his three children were working from home and studying online. Occasionally his parents would stay over as well, causing the electricity bill to hike.

After doing some research on solar panel systems, he wanted to look for a reliable solar energy company that would be able to meet his needs. He opted for Verdant Solar as it gave him all the assurance he needed.

The project team was very professional.

Despite experiencing a light drizzle during the morning of the installation, the team still managed to get all 34 solar panels installed on his rooftop by the end of the day.

Before the installation, he would constantly remind his family members to use electricity carefully and to turn off the air conditioner whenever they are not in the room.

After having the solar PV system, his monthly electric bill was reduced from RM610 per month to just an average of RM20. In six years' time, he will be able to enjoy zero payments for his monthly electricity bill.

Azman commented that he had a good experience with Verdant Solar, whose personnel were professional, reliable and attentive to details.

Benefits of using solar

We live in a world where electricity has never been more important. We use electricity for almost everything.




When you install a home solar system, you can significantly lower energy consumption costs up to 90%.

When you install a home solar system, you can significantly lower energy consumption costs up to 90%. You can really feel good about the savings you and your family will see on your monthly utility bills.

With climate change becoming a global issue, everyone needs to play his part.

Not only does installing solar panels at home significantly help reduce carbon dioxide emissions and carbon footprint, you are also doing your part in contributing to Malaysia's energy target set at 31% by 2025.

■ For more details, go to <https://verdantsolar.my/about-us/>



Verdant Solar founder and chief executive officer Zeth Lim.

MORE THAN FIVE DECADES IN THE PET'S INDUSTRY SINCE 1963

Advertorial

Founded by Dato' Chew Seng Lye since 1963, Chew Thean Yeang Aquatic & Pet (formerly known as Chew Thean Yeang Aquarium) grew from a small fish shop to a multi-storey pet shop in 2004. It became one of the largest pet shop in the Southeast Asia region. It is a one stop modern pet shop located in the heart of Georgetown that offers customers many varieties of live pets and merchandises which includes freshwater and marine fishes, water plants, aquatic products, dogs, cats, small animals, reptiles and pet products.



Chew Thean Yeang Aquatic & Pet:
Headquarters located at Burma Road.



It also provides services to cater customers' needs such as water quality testing, aquarium maintenance, pet grooming and it's the first pet shop to have a boutique pet hotel in a historical building. In order to improve the fish's quality of life, the shop installed a unique centralised filtration system which adopts European technology to ensure fishes feel like they are in their natural habitat.

Furthermore, customers may find screen displays, signboards and brochures present at every corner of shop to educate and provide knowledge to customers on the right way of taking care of pets. To further enhance its quality of service, its staffs are well trained to provide consultations on pets' nutrition, aquascaping and garden landscaping.

Not only that, to keep up with today's technological era, it has an e-mall & online platforms where customer may shop online conveniently at home. This online service also benefits customers who are outstation or overseas. Loyal customers are rewarded with Pet's Link privileges such as special discounts, voucher redemptions, extra points on birthday month and triple points during "Wow Wow Wednesday". Besides that, customers can look forward to festival sales or promotions held by the shop throughout the year.

As Chew Thean Yeang Aquatic & Pet attracts many families and visitors from all walks of life, it has leisure facilities such as a garden pond where people can feed fishes, Cat Garden and pet showcase are places where people can interact and learn the proper way of raising pets. Its goal has always been to nurture compassion and love among society towards animals, that is why it conducted free education tours to schools, universities, organizations and government bodies.

In short, Chew Thean Yeang Aquatic & Pet is not just a regular pet shop where family and friends can enjoy spending their time with company of pets, it also emphasizes on treating pets like family and making their lives comfortable.

For more information

www.cty-fish.com Chew Thean Yeang Aquatic & Pet @cty_aquaticpet
No 82, Burma Road, Georgetown, 10050 Penang.
2-G-6, Solok Mayang Pasir, 11950 Bayan Lepas, Penang.



Raising Awareness:
Free edu-tainment tour provided to society.



Hosting event: CTY Cup International Guppy Contest and Plecostomus Contest participated by more than 8 countries.



Vigor is focused on discovery and development of innovative and effective agribiotechnology products, with the aim to improve the lives of farmers and planters through achieving higher yield and higher income.

Driving revolutionary green solutions

VIGOR Agribiotech Solutions Sdn Bhd was founded in 2009, headquartered in Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia. Vigor is focused on discovery and development of innovative and effective agribiotechnology products, with the aim to improve the lives of farmers and planters through achieving higher yield and higher income.

Inspired by nature and the power of biotechnology to reinvigorate life, Vigor, which was incorporated as an agribiotechnology solutions centre specialised in microbial research and development (R&D) as well as field applications, aims at becoming one of the most respected leading agricultural biotechnology corporation – spanning research, manufacturing and marketing – in Asia. It produces and delivers plant care solutions with real impact, which is its reason for being.

Farmers are facing challenges of decreasing yield performance over time and tend to apply more chemical fertilisers, fungicides and pesticides. However, the root of the problem lies with the deterioration of the soil; the soil which was once healthy, fertile, and very much alive with rich microbial consortia, now turning into hardened, dead and toxic soil.

Vigor has put in years of research and study and it has invented a patented product, microbe-based fertiliser. They are proud to have helped many local and international farmers and planters, and its business associates in fetching better crop yield and income, with the introduction of the revolutionary green solutions by combating the root of the problems – the deterioration of the soil and plant's health.

In year 2010, its microbe-based products were granted Malaysia Innovative Product, ITEX Gold Medal, US INPEX, Award of Excellence, Best Invention Award of ITEX'10, and Best Invention from World Intellectual Property Organization, WIPO.

It is also BioNexus status company, which is recognised by the Malaysian government as a biotechnology company with continuous R&D work, with main innovation being using functional local indigenous microbes and organic-based ingredients to reinvigorate



FORMULATED FOR VIGOR LIFE
缔造茁壮生命的方程式

ate the soil, roots and health condition of crops, that lead to better yield.

They conduct product training and agromonic advisory service as part of their marketing support, through which, the company has gained the trust from their business associates and clients, and reliable business partners.

Vigor has provided a wider range of microbe-based products, not only for plant care such as fertilisation, decomposition, pest and disease control, but also customised formulations for specific applications such as water treatment, food processing, waste processing and compost processing, etc, with continuous research and improvement of its products. They have also developed their own mobile application to assist their customers on precision fertilisation programme using Vigor biofertiliser.

They are dedicated in making more intensive efforts to bring more benefits to the environment by getting Vigor Indigenous Microbes into action. Its products are developed with both human health and the environment firmly in view. From the macroscopic perspective, advances in agronomy and biotechnology address climate change directly.

A good plant care product helps farmers to produce more food per unit of land than ever before in the history of agriculture.

Vigor is excited by the prospects of synergisms on agribiotech that can be harnessed and what it can contribute to the agriculture and food sector's performance, sustainability and dynamism. This serves as the driving force for them to continue to excel.

Holistic wellness from the outside

EVERYONE goes through skin changes at some point in their lives due to age, sun exposure or lifestyle, and dietary habits. Over time, we will realise that our skin complexion is no longer as smooth, radiant and healthy as before.

As the skin is the largest organ of the human body, problems with it have an impact on a person's overall wellness – both physically and emotionally.

Having seen the importance of healthy skin on a person's overall wellness, Datuk Dr Ko Chung Beng set up Dr Ko Skin Specialist Centre back in 1997 to empower Malaysians through quality, innovative as well as up-to-date dermatology and aesthetic treatment.

Born in Kepong in 1961, Dr Ko studied in a Chinese primary school in Kepong and Chung Hua High School in Seremban. At 17 years of age, he travelled to the UK to study A-Levels. Thereafter, he attended Glasgow University, Scotland (1981-1986), and upon graduating, proceeded to work in Internal Medicine in various hospitals in Scotland and England (1986-1990).

He passed the Membership of the Royal Colleges of Physicians (MRCP) examinations in 1990, a postgraduate medical diploma in the UK and became a dermatologist in Hull Hospital (1990-1994).

Dr Ko then went on to obtain a Diploma in Scientific Basis of Dermatology from the University of Wales, Cardiff in 1993. In 1994, he returned to Malaysia and headed the Dermatology Department in Hospital Seremban until 1997.



KLINIK PAKAR KULIT,
ESTETIK DAN LASER
TERBESAR DI MALAYSIA
-MALAYSIA BOOKS OF RECORDS-

Dr Ko Skin Specialist Centre offers holistic wellness from the inside out.

Ko Skin Specialist hopes to help Malaysians of all ages to keep themselves beautiful, healthy and confident. Today, from its humble roots as a small neighbourhood clinic in Klang, the centre has become the largest and leading dermatology and laser centre in

Asia by providing a comprehensive range of in-depth services.

As a testament to its quality of treatment, Dr Ko Skin Specialist Centre has won several awards over the years, which includes Malaysia Book Of Records as "The Largest Skin And Laser Centre In

Malaysia", and The Global Health Awards in 2020, among others.

With close to 50 centres across Malaysia and Indonesia, the homegrown Dr Ko Skin Specialist Centre has attracted medical professionals from across the globe who share the same commitment

to empowering individuals by making them feel young, confident and beautiful both inside and out.

Armed with state-of-the-art equipment, the team of doctors are experts in their fields, and are able to provide the best possible services in upkeeping the centre's commitment.

To ensure it is always at the forefront of the industry, the centre runs an internal research and development department that studies skincare trends, treatment protocol and lifestyle management.

This ensures patients get only the latest and the best when it comes to looking after themselves towards better health and wellness.

As a leading expert in medical and cosmetic dermatology, Dr Ko Skin Specialist Centre formulates its own range of skin, hair and body care that is tailored to Asian skin types and conditions. Its signature skincare brands include Dermax Clinicare, KO Dermacare, 3 Series and KO Perfect Series. The company sells its skincare products exclusively at Ko Skin Specialist, Klinik Dr Ko nationwide, Dr Ko Dermaceutical Retail Stores all over Malaysia, and through its e-commerce site www.drkoskincare.com.

Ko Skin Specialist will continuously strive to aspire more Malaysians to accomplish their desire for as long as beauty has a significant impact on peoples' overall wellness.

■ Find out more about the range of services available at www.koskinspecialist.com

Himalayeti: Introducing Himalaya Salt Sports Candy new brand ambassador

WE might not be able to bring back our childhood, but with the right flavour of our childhood snacks, we can rewind time to relive the nostalgia.

The unforgettable link between the right flavour profiles and sweet childhood memories could bring back memories of a time when we were young and filled with innocence, imagination and fun.

Growing up in Malaysia, chances are you have tried the iconic foot-shaped lollipop dipped in sour powder by Big Foot.

This intense sour candy is just one of the many confectionary brands housed by Nicko Jeep Manufacture Sdn Bhd.

However, what you might not know is that the creator of your favourite childhood candy is also the powerhouse behind the Himalaya Salt Sports Candy.

Inspired by personal experience

The idea behind the sports candy was inspired by a hiking trip that went south, due to cramps and excessive sweating.

Nicko Jeep founder and managing director Kenny Low came up with the innovative idea of having a tasty and functional candy that helps to maintain hydration in the body by adding real Himalayan salt.

This resulted in a candy that boasts a unique taste profile with the perfect balance of lemony, sweet, salty and minty flavours – giving consumers an extra boost of energy to stay active.

What the fluff?

Staying true to its uniqueness,



"The unforgettable link between the right flavour profiles and sweet childhood memories could bring back memories of a time when we were young."

Himalaya Sports chose an equally unique ambassador: a fluffy, huggable Yeti that has the strength to make adulting fun with its wild, childlike imagination.

Himalayeti is a ball of energy,

and wants to spread funergy – a combination of the words fun and energy – to anyone and everyone around it.

It's the perfect fit for Himalaya Sports, as the brand believes in having fun in everyday things, helping people feel alive, which Himalayeti really embodies.

Plans for expansion

Initially launching just one product, the brand has introduced two other candy variants like Himalaya Salt Ginger Lemon Candy for those who prefer feeling toasty minus the mint and Himalaya Pastilles Peppermint for those who like strong and chewy mints.

Meanwhile, the brand also has an extension called Himalaya Vajomba with two candy variants – Himalaya Vajomba Honey Lime Mints and Himalaya Vajomba Actiwhoosh Mints – and is looking to expand its range even further.

Not only that, it has now expanded into 10 other countries in the Asia-Pacific region.



Himalayeti is a ball of energy and wants to spread funergy – a combination of the words fun and energy – to anyone and everyone around it.

THE first positive Covid-19 case detected in a private laboratory locally in February 2020 occurred in a NeoGenix facility.

Touted as the first Covid-19 PCR laboratory, the NeoGenix lab was set up even before the first case was detected in Malaysia.

It is also one of the first four private laboratories to receive approval from the Health Ministry to conduct Covid-19 testing.

From this, NeoGenix has continued to build a reputation as a reliable Covid-19 test provider, capitalising on it to secure more government Covid-19 screening contracts that boosted the company's revenue significantly.

Besides that, NeoGenix would also be partnering with the Johor State Government, Johor State Department of Health, and Immigration Department of Malaysia to set up screening standard operating procedures (SOPs) for special travel arrangements to facilitate essential travel between Malaysia and Singapore through the Reciprocal Green Lane (RGL) and Periodic Commuting Arrangement (PCA) on Aug 14, 2020.

Meanwhile, NeoGenix also provides diagnostic tests to the Embassy of the United States of America, Embassy of China, United Arab Emirates, Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB), PT Foundation and over some 200 hospitals, clinics, and private general laboratories throughout Malaysia and Brunei.

It also provides diagnostic tests to pharmaceutical companies such as Johnson & Johnson and Celltrion, e-health digital companies such as emedAsia and CLEA and property developers such as Gamuda Land and Kerjaya Prospek Group Bhd.

Trusty tester



NeoGenix Laboratoire managing director Dr Sam Kuan Chee Sian.

Furthermore, in line with the recent sudden spike in cases throughout Malaysia and in view of the crucial need of a medical diagnostic laboratory in screening the Covid-19 test samples collected nationwide, NeoGenix is expanding.

It will include additional laboratories into its portfolio with two in Klang Valley, one in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, one in Kuching, Sarawak, one in Kampar, Perak, and one lab in Johor to accommodate and prepare for the increasing demand in screenings.

Besides that, the company was recognised for Excellent Lab Analysis at the 2019 Consumers Recommended Awards organised by the National Consumers Action Council, Asia Pacific Top Excellence Service (2021-2023), SME 100 Fast Moving Companies Award, and

CTOS Credit Excellence Award, demonstrating that its reputation for excellence extends beyond the healthcare industry to ordinary consumers.

NeoGenix Laboratoire Sdn Bhd is an ISO 15189 accredited molecular diagnostic medical laboratory, which consisted of Diagnostic Department (General Biochemistry, Immunology, Haematology, Infectious Disease, Genetic, Genomics & Oncology Laboratories) and R&D Department. NeoGenix is the pioneer and the only private laboratory in Malaysia in conducting "Research and Development (R&D)+Service" integrated commercial mode and an overall solution provider of third-party medical diagnosis.

A niche player specialising in molecular infectious diseases testing, cancer testing, precision medicine, and prediction medicine – more than 50 molecular tests – utilising the techniques of real-time PCR, microarray, NGS, and MassArray systems.

All tests are enrolled in external quality assurance programmes organised by the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) (Australia), Quality Control for Molecular Diagnostics (QCMD) (Scotland, UK), College of American Pathologists (CAP) (United States) and Genomics Quality Assessment (GenQA) (Scotland, UK) to indicate the accuracy and precision attained in its diagnostic tests process and meet the international standards.



NeoGenix teams at the SME 100 Fast Moving Companies awards.



A NeoGenix facility detected the first local positive Covid-19 case in a private laboratory.




It was in 2012 when we started our journey with 2,000 subscribers and merely 7 employees. In a time when telcos were charging customers phenomenal fees for postpaid plans, we wanted to be different. Our motto 'Back to Basics' is reflected in our postpaid plan offerings where we reduce unnecessary bundled add-ons thus bringing more affordability to consumers. Our plans started from only RM8 a month and over time, we introduced more plans in catering to a larger market.

Capturing more market share at an aggressive pace, we achieved the 1 million subscriber mark in 2018. Not resting on our laurels, we soon spread our wings to Singapore in 2019 and introduced Data Without Borders for subscribers to roam between Malaysia and Singapore without incurring extra charges.

redONE Celebrating a decade of Excellence!

We continued to grow in a saturated telco market and achieved 1.2 million subscribers in 2020. Well received by Malaysian telco consumers, we continued our uptrend even in a time of the Covid-19 pandemic. The next step in our regional expansion plan was Thailand, where we overcame the language and cultural barrier through the sheer determination of a dedicated team launching redONE Thailand in 2021. We are now looking at Indonesia and the Philippines as our next destinations this year.

Today we celebrate excellence, and we thank you for 10 Amazing years, and here's to many more!



Year	Milestones
2022	Targeted launch of redONE Indonesia and redONE Philippines
2021	1.25 Million Subscribers in Malaysia Launched redONE Thailand with plans from only THB99 a month
2020	1.2 Million Subscribers in Malaysia Introduced its first Unlimited Data & Calls plan, Hybrid50U
2019	Launched redONE Singapore and introduced Data Without Borders Plans start from only SGD18 a month
2018	Reached 1 Million Subscribers in Malaysia
2017	Launched the Amazing Postpaid Plans from only RM8 a month
2012	2,000 Subscribers in Malaysia Plans start from only RM8 a month

Look, feel and do good

AS the global economy recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic, the aesthetic services market globally is expected to revive, a situation in which Klinik Dr Inder is primed to meet the rising demand.

The clinic was founded by Datuk Dr Inder Kaur and located in PJ CentreStage, Section 13, Petaling Jaya.

Through determination and interest in aesthetic medicine, Dr Inder has built up her clinic as a one-stop centre that provides full aesthetic services.

She said, "When people look good, their outlook on life changes. They become more confident, more pragmatic and thus contribute to positive vibes among family and friends."

With years of experience in aesthetic medicine, she draws inspiration from her late father, a hospital assistant who instilled her with strong positive values that underscore service to society.

Dr Inder believes success is the collective work of all staff and the conducive environment, as well as that quality healthcare starts from the initial consultation.

"Our aim is to give patients the feeling that we are beside them at all times throughout their journey with us," she added.

From humble beginnings in 2015 with Dr Inder as the sole doctor, Klinik Dr Inder today has four full-time doctors.

As a strong advocate of training, Dr Inder channels her time, efforts

and resources towards training her staff to be on par with the industry worldwide, positioning the clinic to offer optimal services to its growing clientele.

Dr Inder adopts a holistic approach towards her patients, with whom she develops a bond that helps them not only look but feel good.

Among the accolades she has received are the Global Health, Asia Pacific Aesthetic and Hair Transplant Clinic of the year award for 2020 and 2021, the Global Excellence Award 2020 and the Anugerah Ikon Usahawan 2020.

She was also voted Female Entrepreneur of the Year 2020 by the Star Outstanding Business Awards.

Dr Inder is also the president of Follicular Unit Extraction Malaysia Society, Diplomate of the American

Board Of Hair Restoration Surgery and board certified in aesthetic medicine by the American Academy Of Aesthetic Medicine USA.

She is also passionate about research and development, with her recent publication being a 'Case Study on Treating Hair Loss Caused by Synthetic Hair Implant', the first Malaysian to have a paper published by the ISHRS forum.

Another case study on 'Scalp Micro Pigmentation Corrective with Hair Transplant' was also published in the *Journal of Asia Pacific Aesthetic Sciences* for the latest research and advancement in aesthetic medical practice.

She hopes to collaborate with a local university in medicine and pharmacy to conduct research and development in instruments and products.



KLINIK DR INDER

Redefining Beauty & Health



Dr Inder said, 'Our aim is to give patients the feeling that we are beside them at all times throughout their journey with us.'

Bolstering Malaysia's trade competitiveness



Do reach out to Matrade because the time to export is now, said Mustafa.

"The time to export is now. Thus, Malaysian companies are encouraged to embark on sustainability to remain relevant in the global marketplace as going global is the way forward."

Mohd Mustafa Abdul Aziz

AS Malaysia's national trade promotion agency under the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) is committed to support Malaysian companies to penetrate overseas markets via its global presence.

Malaysia's trade in 2021 surpassed RM2tril mark for the first time with exports valued at RM1.24tril, achieving 99% of the 12th Malaysia Plan target for 2025.

Determined to uphold these triumphs, Matrade devised a total of 286 programmes based on the strategic directions of the National Trade Blueprint, with greater emphasis on digitalisation and sustainability. Commensurate to promoting Malaysia's enterprises to the world, a myriad of assistance is provided by the government, through Matrade, to aid Malaysian exporters to go global.

Matrade's facilities, namely Business

Information Centre, Malaysia Export Exhibition Centre, Market Development Grant, Services Export Fund, advisory services and MyExport Services are set for companies who have registered with Matrade to obtain support, real-time market intelligence reports and trade leads to keep abreast of the latest trends.

"The time to export is now. Thus, Malaysian companies are encouraged to embark on sustainability to remain relevant in the global marketplace as going global is the way forward," stated Matrade chief executive officer Mohd Mustafa Abdul Aziz.

"In addition, Malaysia International Halal Showcase 2022 is back and will take place in a hybrid format from Sept 7 to 10. Hence, I encourage Malaysian companies to participate in this event," he added.

■ For more information, visit Matrade's website at www.matrade.gov.my.

The Time to
EXPORT
is Now.

GROW YOUR EXPORT BUSINESS WITH US BY YOUR SIDE

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