

# Star Special

THE STAR, TUESDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2024

EXPORT EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2023

## Where distinction and quality take centre stage

Exporters recognised for their commitment in driving positive momentum in the trade industry



The Awards winners together with (first row, from left) Star Media Group (SMG) chief business officer Lydia Wang, non-executive director Datuk Dr Mohd Aminuddin Rouse, Matrade chief executive officer Datuk Mohd Mustafa Abdul Aziz, SMG chief executive officer Alex Yeow, chairman Tan Sri Chor Chee Heung, Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz, Standard-Chartered Malaysia chairman Datuk Yvonne Chia, chief executive officer Mak Joon Nien, PKT Logistics Group chief revenue officer Kuan Eu Jin, MDEC chief executive officer Mahadhir Aziz and Standard Chartered Malaysia managing director Sammeer.



# Celebrating perseverance in the trade industry

ANOTHER year, another commemoration of the export industry's best. The fourth instalment of the Export Excellence Awards (EEA) has concluded with 36 winners being awarded across 11 categories – their grit and determination to shine in the export scene and record a steady year-on-year growth, recognised.

The Exporter of the Year for the mid-tier and large companies segment went to G.B. Industries Sdn Bhd while Vepro Group Sdn Bhd nabbed the Exporter of the Year award for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Datuk Anna Teo, group chief executive officer and founder of Hernan Corporation Sdn Bhd, was announced Woman Exporter of the Year, much to her delight.

Separately, Mac World Industries Sdn Bhd, which manufactures and supplies raw materials to food and beverage brands worldwide, took home the special award for halal products.

The culmination of the EEA 2023 took place at Westin Kuala Lumpur with a gala night of good food and entertaining performances.

Gracing the event with his presence was Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz.

He congratulated the winners, as well as the team behind the Awards for their dedication and hard work over the past



(from left) Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation chief executive officer Mahadhir Aziz, Kuan, Yeow, Standard Chartered Malaysia chairman Datuk Yvonne Chia, Tengku Zafrul, SMG chairman Tan Sri Chor Chee Heung, Mak, Datuk Mohd Mustafa and SMG non-executive director Datuk Dr Mohd Aminuddin Rouse kicking off the gala night with a yee sang toss.

four years.

"In taking the lead to organise this awards programme with your partners, Star Media Group has demonstrated their ability to go beyond their role as a media content company. Over the years, SMG has constantly sought innovative ways to connect with, add value to and inspire the community.

"That value-add gets a boost through the impactful collaboration between Star Media Group and Standard Chartered Malaysia – two strong brands working together, serving as enablers in elevating our country's export industry competitiveness to the next level.

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Tonight's celebration is a testament of our collective journey, spearheaded by the EEA programme. As we reflect on our journey with our partners and supporters, you would agree that Star Media Group values the friendships made and the insights gained from trade industry experts.

Today, the EEA programme has evolved, driving a thriving ecosystem that fosters collaboration, capacity building and knowledge sharing among local exporters. We successfully launched the EEA Soiree to nurture and strengthen relationships among past winners, partners and sponsors this year. We also provided a platform for our Strategic Partners, the Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Electrical and Electronics Association of Malaysia to host forums at Menara Star, further amplifying the impact of our engagement.

Tonight's winners exemplify the strength and resilience of the Malaysian spirit, contributing significantly to the nation's trade stability. To our award recipients, your unrelenting dedication deserves a resounding applause. Congratulations on your well-deserved achievements.

**Alex Yeow**

Chief Executive Officer  
Star Media Group



I was informed that the overall quality of the entries has improved significantly. Elements on sustainability, ESG and innovation have clearly been embraced by the participants, as we see these embedded in most of their processes.

We are confident that the embracing of those elements will also further enable these companies to build resilience, grow their exports and stay ahead of the curve.

This reflects the EEA's increasing prestige and credibility in attracting quality participants. This has partly contributed towards fulfilling the objectives and aspirations of the New Investment Policy, the New Industrial Master Plan 2030, Industry4WRD as well as the new i-ESG Framework, so thank you, all.

In view of that, I believe many of our EEA participants have already benefitted from Matrade's various export-oriented programmes, be it for traditional or new markets.

In the ever-evolving business landscape, it is fundamental to have a future-proof, sustainable business strategy for business longevity. We, as Malaysians, are known to be resilient and optimistic.

Tonight, as we celebrate the winners, I applaud your unrelenting efforts in contributing to the stability of our nation's trade industry. Let me extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the winners. Your commitment in driving positive momentum in the trade industry deserves a big round of applause.

**Tengku Zafrul**

Minister,  
Investment, Trade and Industry Minister



Witnessing the journey of the Export Excellence Awards from the beginning to its current stature evokes a mixed feeling of excitement and nostalgia as this event evolved into a platform that not only celebrates success but also inspires continuous improvements within the Malaysian export community.

I believe that the EEA complements our efforts to boosting competitiveness towards realising the nation's export agenda. Over the years, this event has become a distinguished beacon of recognition for outstanding achievements in exports and Matrade is truly honoured to be a part of it.

In our quest to positioning Malaysia as the major trading nation, EEA acts as a catalyst for our exporters to strive towards excellence, leveraging innovation and sustainability to seize the opportunity of the global market.

Matrade advocates the adoption of sustainability practices among Malaysian exporters and our involvement in EEA reflects our efforts in shaping the trade landscape to align with the requirement of the global community.

I hope that the strategic partnership between Matrade and EEA will encourage more Malaysian exporters to expand their wings and explore the boundless opportunities of the global market.

I thank The Star for organising this prestigious event and I look forward to working closely with everyone involved, to ensure greater success of Malaysia's exports.

**Datuk Mohd Mustafa Abdul Aziz**

Chief Executive Officer  
Matrade



In the last 24 years, we have gone through multiple unpredictable events that have shaped the global landscape and defined the 21st century. We experienced a global financial crisis, a pandemic, globalisation alongside the risk of deglobalisation, and the Paris Agreement that placed us all on a journey to achieving Net Zero. All the while with technology growing rapidly in the background.

We can expect that the course of our trajectory in the coming years to continue to be unscripted. For majority of Malaysian exporters, it's important they remain aware of and prepared for the ongoing changes.

The ideal scenario would be to become more digitally focused to enhance efficiency, and to strive for a balance sheet that minimises operational and financial leverage to remain nimble and flexible during unprecedented times.

Collaboration is just as important. There is a huge network outside of Malaysia with a lot of potential. If you're an exporter, you're not competing domestically but globally, hence success is a collective agenda.

As the oldest operating bank in Malaysia, covering 52 markets, we are proud to have been part of the EEA programme for four years now, and I am glad that it has provided the perfect platform for exporters to come together, learn and network.

With Malaysian exporters collectively coming together, we are set to have a fantastic story for the rest of the 21st century.

**Mak Joon Nien**

Chief Executive Officer  
Standard Chartered Malaysia



It is very invigorating to see new participants submitting for the Awards, despite it being only in its fourth year. The Export Excellence Awards is rapidly becoming the event of the year where companies are not merely recognised, but celebrated for their outstanding export achievements.

Moving forward, I envision the Awards programme as a dynamic platform where local champions are empowered to transcend boundaries and venture into international markets.

I would also like to see more emphasis on environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles, just like what PKT is doing now. We have made very firm commitments about achieving our ESG goals by 2039 completely.

As ESG criteria become increasingly stringent for overseas buyers, it may pose significant challenges for our local champions to meet these standards. Therefore, it is imperative that we place a stronger emphasis on ESG moving forward.

This proactive approach will ensure we are well-prepared and not at risk of being marginalised in the export market as ESG requirements intensify.

Lastly, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Award winners. It is very refreshing to see all of them coming out here tonight, dressing sharply and enjoying themselves, celebrating their victories nonetheless.

I eagerly anticipate the unfolding of yet another exciting year of the EEA.

**Kuan Eu Jin**

Chief Revenue Officer  
PKT Logistics Group



# Empowering businesses to grow and go global

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“This partnership not only recognises the importance of championing and promoting the country’s top local exporters in global trade, but also builds and nurtures a stronger ecosystem for local exporters to support one another, encourage cross-fertilisation of ideas, share best practices, and build capacity. Most importantly, all these positively contribute to the country’s GDP.”

SMG chief executive officer Alex Yeow also took the opportunity to thank everyone who made the fourth edition of the Awards possible.

“As we applaud the outstanding achievements of the organisations being honoured tonight, it is equally important to acknowledge the invaluable support and trust from our partners and sponsors.

“Star Media Group has been privileged to collaborate with esteemed organisations, and we extend our gratitude to Standard Chartered Malaysia, our partner who has been with us on this journey for the last four years; Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation, our patron; PKT Logistics Group, our co-sponsor; BDO Malaysia, the Awards’ auditor, and Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation Sdn Bhd, our technology partner,” Yeow expressed.

Standard Chartered Malaysia chief executive officer Mak Joon Nien also commended the Award winners for their contributions to the economy and the jobs they created, on top of their incredible effort and innovation.

“These winners lead a cohort of Malaysian

businesses that are vital to the nation’s economic prosperity.

“Not only do they create jobs and wealth for the nation, but they also take the best of Malaysia to the world.

“With Standard Chartered’s deep roots in trade, the spirit of the Awards is close to our hearts.

“We hope the Awards will inspire and encourage more businesses to grow beyond Malaysia while honouring the heroes of the nation who show tremendous resilience while navigating global headwinds,” said Mak in his speech.

Promoting export and sharing best practices

In the months leading up to the gala night, several on-ground activities took place to promote export and share best practices within the industry.

Workshops were conducted in Penang and Johor for companies to learn export strategies, while various events were held by trade and industry associations for their members – in addition to the networking sessions that brought together EEA’s partners, past winners and industry experts to exchange insightful ideas.

The upcoming Export Excellence Awards 2024 will soon be announced and opened for submissions. Stay tuned to *The Star* for more EEA news.

■ For more information on Export Excellence Awards, go to [exportawards.com.my](http://exportawards.com.my) or email [eea@thestar.com.my](mailto:eea@thestar.com.my)

EXPORT EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2023 WINNERS

Exporter of the Year		
Category		Companies
Mid-tier and Large Companies		GB Industries Sdn Bhd
Small and Medium Enterprises		Vepro Group Sdn Bhd
Halal Products		Woman Exporter of the Year
Mac World Industries Sdn Bhd		Datuk Anna Teo, Hernan Corporation Sdn Bhd
Top Industry Award Winners		
Mid-tier and Large Companies	Type of Award	Category
Mac World Industries Sdn Bhd	Gold	Agriculture, Food & Beverage
Erapoly Global Sdn Bhd	Silver	
Finesse Moulding (M) Sdn Bhd	Gold	Consumer Products
Top Glove Corporation Bhd	Silver	
GB Industries Sdn Bhd	Gold	Industrial Products
Steel Recon Industries Sdn Bhd	Silver	
Amalgamated Batteries Manufacturing (Sarawak) Sdn Bhd	Gold	Machinery, Electrical and Electronics
Infopro Sdn Bhd	Gold	Services
IX Telecom Sdn Bhd	Silver	
Small and Medium Enterprises	Type of Award	Category
Kilang Papan PGP Sdn Bhd	Gold	Agriculture, Food & Beverage
Rompin Integrated Pineapple Industries Sdn Bhd	Silver	
Proguard Safety Manufacturing Sdn Bhd	Gold	Consumer Products
Maxvue Vision Sdn Bhd	Silver	
Swift PMAS Sdn Bhd	Gold	Industrial Products
S K Specialties Sdn Bhd	Silver	
Vepro Group Sdn Bhd	Gold	Machinery, Electrical and Electronics
EQX Materials Sdn Bhd	Silver	
Swift Solutions MSC Sdn Bhd	Gold	Services
GPRO Global Sdn Bhd	Silver	
Business Achiever		
1. Allin International Holding Sdn Bhd	3. Island Hospital Sdn Bhd	
2. Gajas Putih Sdn Bhd	4. Top Fruits Sdn Bhd	
Most Promising		
1. Guppy Plastic Industries Sdn Bhd	6. Maypap Sdn Bhd	
2. H2O Flow Sdn Bhd	7. Ominent Sdn Bhd	
3. Kossan Industries Sdn Bhd	8. Syarikat Perusahaan Jooi Bersaudara Sdn Bhd	
4. Mah Sing Plastics Industries Sdn Bhd	9. Tristar Global Sdn Bhd	
5. Mattroy Logistics (M) Sdn Bhd		

## ADVANCING EXPORTS ACCELERATING GROWTH

What we offer to Malaysian companies:



Exporters Development Programmes



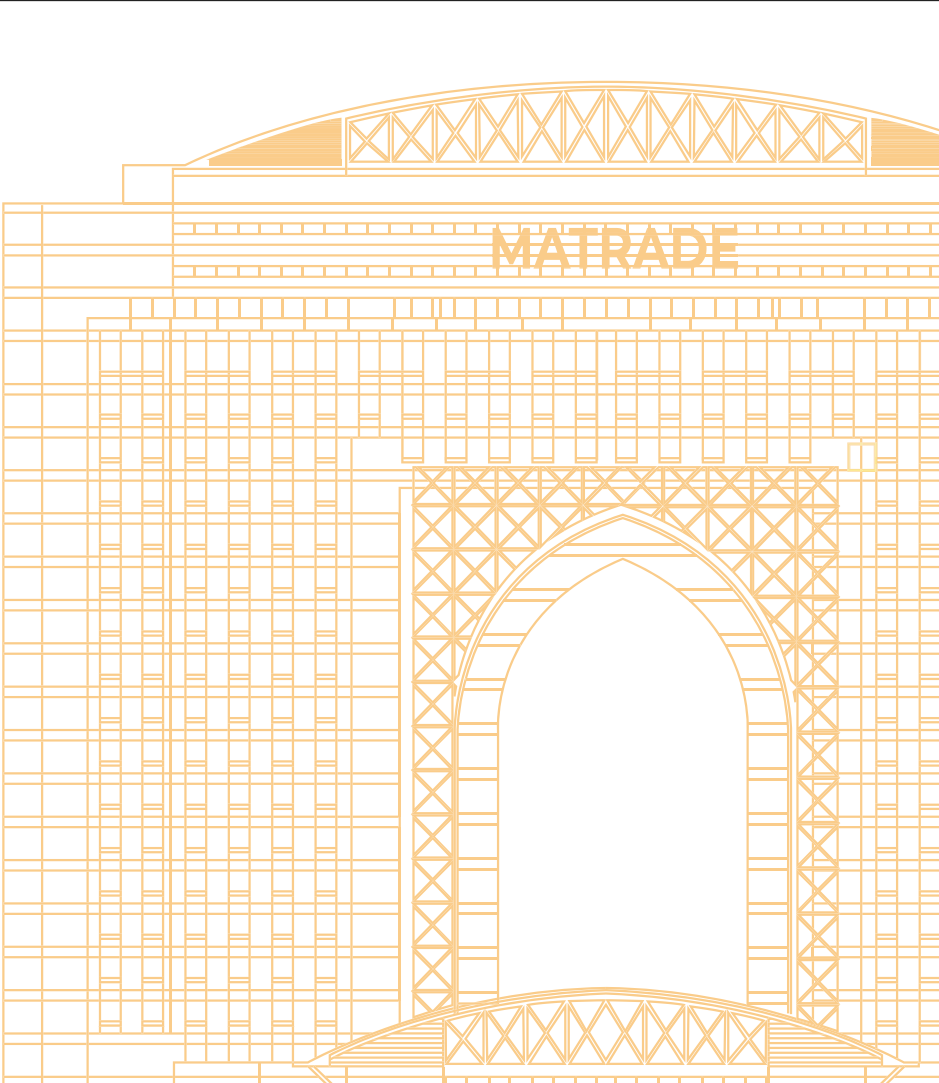
Export Promotion Activities



Trade and Market Intelligence



Trade Advisory and Support



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# Making waves in export

Photos by Glenn Guan, Yap Chee Hong, Art Chen, Low Lay Phon, and Izzrafiq Alias



The Business Achiever Award winners capturing a significant moment with Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz (centre), Star Media Group (SMG) chief executive officer Alex Yeow (left) and Standard Chartered Malaysia chief executive officer Mak Joon Nien (right).



Yeow presenting a token of appreciation to Investment, Trade and Industry Ministry deputy secretary general for management and investment Datuk Bahria Mohd Tamil. She was the eminent chief judge for the Awards.



SK Specialties Sdn Bhd managing director Adrian Wong proudly showing off the silver award for the Industrial Products category under the SME segment.



Vepro Group Sdn Bhd director Chu Chee Seng (left) and G.B. Industries Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Ong Boon Kee showing off their awards including Exporter of the Year for SME, and mid-tier and large companies respectively.



Steel Recon Industries Sdn Bhd international sales director Nicholas Wan (centre) and this team celebrating the company's silver win under the Industrial Products category for mid-tier and large companies.



**Winning smiles:** The Most Promising Award winners with Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation chief executive officer Datuk Mohd Mustafa Abdul Aziz (centre), Standard Chartered Malaysia managing director Sammeer (left) and SMG chief business officer Lydia Wang (right).



Guests enjoying themselves at the Export Excellence Awards 2023 gala night, which was held at Westin Kuala Lumpur.

> Guests at the gala night were treated to beer as Carlsberg was the official beer sponsor.



**One for the books:** (from left) Datuk Mohd Mustafa, Yeow, SMG chairman Tan Sri Chor Chee Heung, Tengku Zafrul, Standard Chartered Malaysia chairman Datuk Yvonne Chia, Mak, and PKT Logistics Group chief revenue officer Kuan Eu Jin posing for the cameras at the Export Excellence Awards 2023 gala night.



# Scaling new heights in export

G.B. Industries Sdn Bhd is deeply honoured to have received the prestigious Exporter of the Year award for the mid-tier and large companies segment at the recent Export Excellence Awards (EEA) 2023.

This achievement reflects its collective team effort, inspiring each member of the company to strive for even greater goals, according to its sales and marketing manager Aaron Ong.

“We are committed to ensuring Novax continues to be the preferred brand in the electrical safety sector,” he says.

Novax is the company's flagship and global brand that offers a full range of rubber-insulating gloves and sleeves, and dielectric safety boots and blankets to protect electrical workers while they are on the job.

The company initially operated as an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) before establishing Novax – today, it is an industry leader for electrical safety products and is trusted by some of the world's largest utility and electrical contractors.

## Expanding from the get-go

G.B. Industries has engaged in international trade since its inception in 1987, recognising the vast potential of the global market.

Additionally, its unwavering commitment to consistent product quality is the cornerstone of



G.B. Industries Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Ong Boon Kee (fifth from left) and Ong (fifth from right) together with their team celebrating their wins at the Export Excellence Awards 2023 gala night. — YAP CHEE HONG/The Star

the company's success.

All of their products meet rigorous international standards, including the American Society of Testing and Materials, European Standard, and the International Electrotechnical Commission which contribute significantly to their brand development.

“Implementing a robust quality management system, along with incorporating automation and artificial intelligence in our factory, has empowered us with a reliable tracking system for all our products, ensuring they adhere to international standards.

“Innovations are also pivotal to

our export strategies and we consistently unveil several new products annually.

“Leveraging Novax's robust presence as a leading brand in the electrical safety sector, we have successfully introduced diverse items like dielectric blankets, inflators, and line hoses, strategically collaborating with skilled Malaysian manufacturers for their production,” says Ong.

## Staying ahead in a dynamic global landscape

Nevertheless, the journey in export is an uphill battle.

Some of the major obstacles that G.B. Industries faced while expanding globally include stiff

competition with gloves that are made in the US while introducing their Made-in-Malaysia dielectric gloves.

“Overcoming the country risk associated with Malaysia's developing status required years of dedication to improving product quality and services, ultimately enabling us to penetrate global markets.

“However, despite geopolitical challenges impacting our export strategies, G.B. Industries has proactively adapted by embracing new export and marketing strategies, allowing us to stay ahead in a dynamic global landscape.”

The emergence of the environ-

mental, social and governance (ESG) keyword has prompted the company to also integrate sustainability practices across all management levels.

Ong shares that they have incorporated renewable energy into their operations, discouraged gender bias, and created job opportunities for physically challenged residents in their community.

Beyond internal efforts, they are extending their commitment to sustainability by collaborating with suppliers to promote responsible practices.

For those aspiring to follow in the footsteps of G.B. Industries, chief executive officer Ong Boon Kee recommends that the participation in the EEA should be viewed as a strategic move – one that goes beyond receiving the award to assess their standing within the industry.

“Participation in the EEA is an invitation to benchmark your business against the best in the field. It offers a comprehensive overview of industry standards, innovative practices, and the latest trends that are shaping global markets, providing invaluable insights into areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.”

G.B. Industries also won a gold award under the Industrial Products category, for the mid-tier and large companies segment.

# A strategic, multifaceted approach for success

VEPRO Group Sdn Bhd's entry into the global market was motivated by a commitment to providing innovative solutions and services to industries worldwide especially in South-East Asia.

Founded in April 2003, the company recognised the increasing demand for its diverse offerings, including Robotic Applications, Packaging and End of Line, secondary packaging solutions like Filling (Bottle, Gable Top and Aseptic Bricks), Canning and labelling machines as well as Turnkey solutions for Food & Beverage production lines.

It has also established a branch in Indonesia called PT Vepro International and is working with partners in other parts of the world, thus allowing the company to strengthen its international presence.

## A recipe that works

Vepro's success in the international market can be attributed to a multifaceted approach marked by innovation, diversification, and customer-centric ethos.

Apart from its technological advancements and industry-specific solutions, the company offers a comprehensive suite of services that are tailored to meet the various requirements of its clients.

“At Vepro, ensuring our products and services meet the diverse needs of international markets is a top priority. We start by conducting thorough market research to understand the



Chu (fourth from right) and his team posing with the trophies at the EEA 2023 Gala Night. Vepro Group Sdn Bhd won the Exporter of the Year award for the SME segment, and gold award for Machinery, Electrical and Electronics category for the SME segment. — YAP CHEE HONG/The Star

unique requirements of each region.

“Our approach is to adapt our offerings to align with local preferences, regulations, and industry standards. We work closely with strategic local partners and maintain a dedicated legal and regulatory team to ensure compliance with international standards,” says Vepro Group Sdn Bhd director Chu Chee Seng.

Central to the company's achievements, Vepro prioritises customer satisfaction and fosters lasting relationships.

“Customer feedback is valued, and we actively engage in ongoing communication to refine our products based on evolving needs. Through these efforts,

Vepro is committed to delivering solutions that effectively cater to the diverse demands of our international clientele.”

Furthermore, incorporating sustainability practices enhances their brand reputation and competitiveness on a global scale, in addition to ensuring economic efficiency, Chu points out.

“A growing number of customers base their purchasing decisions on a company's commitment to environmental responsibility. By embracing sustainable practices, we not only attract environmentally conscious clients but also showcase a forward-thinking approach that resonates positively in the global marketplace.

Key initiatives include adopting eco-friendly manufacturing processes and materials, seeking sustainable alternatives to reduce their products' ecological impact as well as implementing technologies that minimise energy consumption from manufacturing to transportation.

## Navigating rough seas

“The global economic landscape has brought challenges to our export business, such as currency fluctuations and shifts in demand. To adapt, we've diversified into various markets, ensuring stability.

“Flexible supply chain management helps us respond quickly to changes, and we employ currency hedging to mitigate exchange rate risks. Cost optimisation measures maintain competitiveness, and strategic partnerships with local distributors assist in navigating market-specific challenges.

“We focus on innovation, adapting products to meet emerging market needs, and prioritise customer support to address concerns during economic uncertainties.

“By staying vigilant, proactive, and responsive, Vepro aims to not only overcome challenges but also find opportunities for sustainable growth in the international market,” Chu shares.

Vepro was named Exporter of the Year for the SME segment at the Export Excellence Awards 2023.

The acknowledgement, Chu says, not only serves as a testa-

ment to their dedication and hard work but also presents a valuable opportunity for them to increase their visibility, locally and overseas.

“This award will play a significant role in making Vepro more widely known in the market. Moreover, we anticipate that this recognition will instil greater confidence in our customers regarding our capabilities.

“We see it as validation of our commitment to excellence and innovation in the export sector. The trust and confidence of our customers are of utmost importance to us, and we are excited about the positive impact this award will have in strengthening those relationships.”

For fellow SMEs looking to venture into exports, Chu reminds them to start by thoroughly researching their target markets—understand the local culture, rules, and trends.

“Craft a clear export strategy with specific goals and plans. Form strong partnerships with local distributors, adapt your strategies to changing market conditions, learn about international trade regulations, and invest in technology for efficiency.

“Plan financially for potential challenges, prioritise customer relationships, consider integrating sustainable practices, stay resilient and patient through the process are some of the steps to help SMEs navigate the complexities of the export scene, fostering success in new markets,” Chu highlights.





**EXPORTER OF THE YEAR**  
(MID-TIER AND LARGE COMPANIES)

**GB INDUSTRIES SDN BHD**



**CONGRATULATIONS**



**GB INDUSTRIES SDN BHD**

(166764-T)

**MID-TIER AND LARGE COMPANIES**

**EXPORTER OF THE YEAR**

**EXPORT EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2023**





EXPORTER OF THE YEAR  
(SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES)

VEPRO GROUP SDN BHD



CONGRATULATIONS



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(613188-X)

SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

EXPORTER OF THE YEAR

EXPORT EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2023



# Leading the charge in robotics

VEPRO Group Sdn Bhd director Chu Chee Seng's father once said, "Never stop what has started or give up halfway".

These wise words have been etched in his mind since young, turning into a life-long motto that he uses as a guiding principle in ensuring the success of his company.

Testament to this is the growth of the company, which has been at the forefront of robotics in Malaysia ever since their inception in 2003.

Vepro's core business activities are Robotic Applications, Automatic Filling and Packaging Machineries, Customised Software, Flexible Plant Automation, as well as Quality Control inspection systems.

Its system design and factory automation solutions are used in a wide range of industries such as food and beverage, pharmaceutical and chemical.

The company also supplies Robot Training Kits to local universities and colleges to inspire, raise and train the next generation of enthusiasts in robotics.

From the get-go, Vepro's has aimed to empower local companies and multinationals (MNCs) worldwide, especially in South-East Asia, with Robotics and Automation that will help improve productivity and efficiency, thereby reducing dependency on production labours.

"In business, it is crucial to develop sound financial planning, cultivate a healthy client base and keep abreast with technology. Taking part in local and international conferences, as well as trade exhibitions are important to building our business visibility and reputation," shares Chu.

He further explains, "Having MNCs as customers helped us to ensure that stringent system performance and high safety standards are complied with, and this further strengthens Vepro's reliability and reputation. This also helps the company manage their cash flow efficiently.

"In order to reduce foreign labour dependency, the government has encouraged the use of Robotics and Automation in this era of Industrial 4.0.

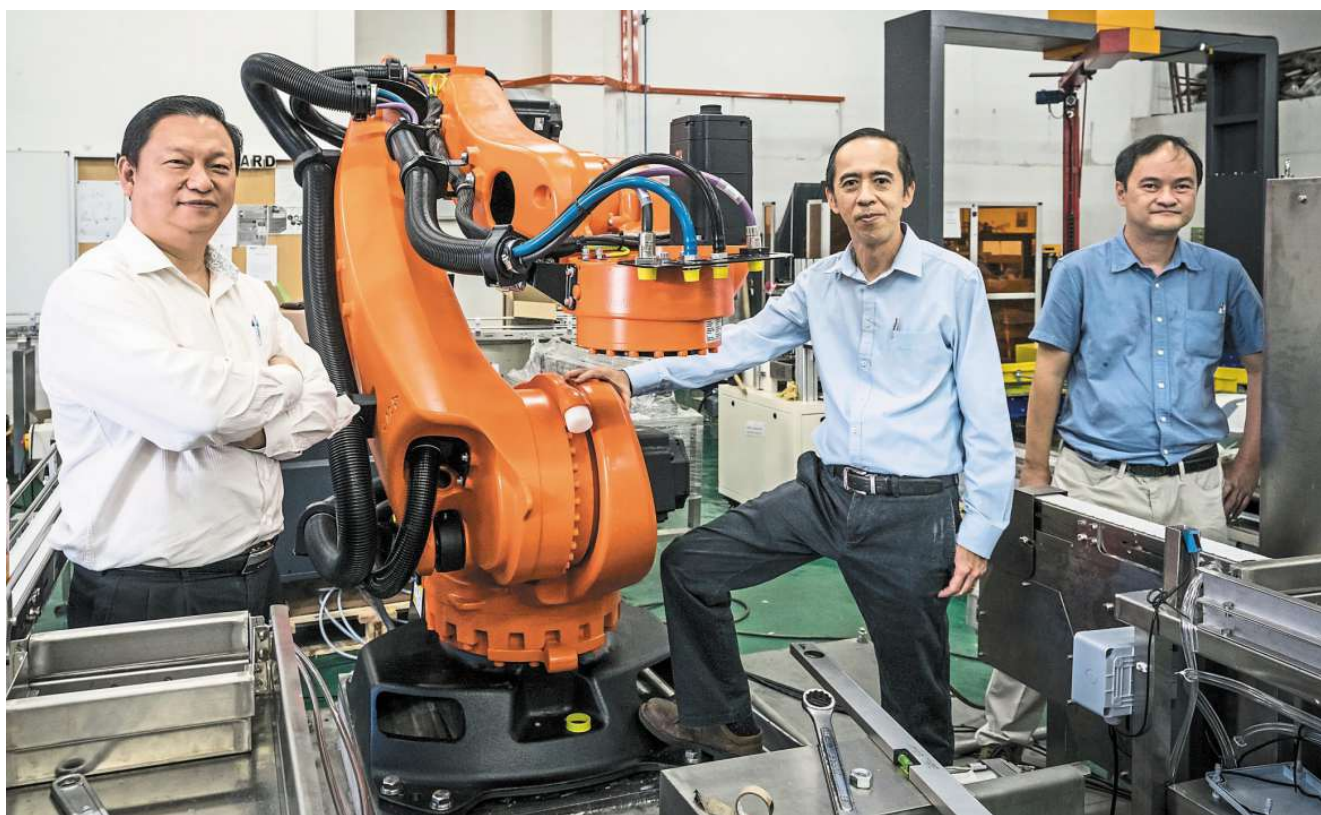
"Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia are moving ahead in robotics by leaps and bounds. It is imperative that Malaysia embraces this reality to remain competitive," he adds.

Since the pandemic, Chu notes that Vepro has contributed to creating a manufacturing environment that incorporates social distancing as less workers are needed on the production floor.

## A fierce passion

The company's vision and mission stemmed from Chu's fascination with robots that could be designed and programmed to follow human commands and instructions.

He pursued a mechanical engineering degree at Universiti Malaya where he was first introduced to the world of robots by his lecturer and mentor Prof Dr Zahari Taha.



(From left) Chu, executive director Lim Swee Peng and general manager Chin Khai with the Autonomous Mobile Robots (AMR).

After a stint in local companies, Chu joined a German robotics company where he discovered that robotics commanded a niche market that requires a high entry level and expertise, giving it an exceptional competitive advantage.

Therefore, his passion and journey into robotics grew and culminated with the establishment of Vepro with two of his university mates, Lim Swee Peng and Chin Khai.

The trio has not looked back since and continues to spearhead the robotics industrial revolution in Malaysia, with later expansion to South-East Asian countries including Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

## Solidifying its position

Vepro is a member of the International Federation of Robotics (IFR), a professional non-profit organisation to promote, strengthen and protect the robotics industry worldwide.

IFR directly represents over 100 members from more than 20 countries; Vepro is the only member to originate from South-East Asia, says Chu.

Currently, Vepro is also a council member of the Malaysian Consortium of Mid-Tier Companies (MCMTC), committee member of the Malaysia Automation Technology Association and exco member of The Malaysia Robotics and Automation Society.

In 2023, Vepro introduced Autonomous Mobile Robots (AMR) and Automated Guided Vehicle (AGV) into their product portfolio, working with renowned AMR manufacturers in China.

It covers intralogistics full-stack scenarios, from loading and unloading Unman Forklift Trucks to High-level Storage, Putaway and Picking.

Vepro will soon join forces with TechCapital Resources Sdn Bhd (both are under Malaysian Technology Development Corporation investee companies) to venture into Agriculture Automation under the T-Robot



Chu (left) together with the Vepro team at the AllPack Exhibition 2023 at Jakarta International Expo (JIE expo), Indonesia.



Vepro's range of Automated Guided Vehicle (AGV) that was introduced in 2023.

brand name.

"T-Robot, a pioneer in industrial automation, has thrived for over a decade in revolutionising factory operations. It is dedicated to liberating factories from manual labour constraints, specialising in automating processes, enabling seamless digitalisation, and elevating productivity levels.

"The commitment extends

beyond automation; T-Robot equips clients with tailored industrial technical training, empowering them to harness the full potential of our solutions," explains Chu.

T-Robot has been awarded Pioneer Status (PS) in robotics and digitalisation by then International Trade & Industry Ministry (now Investment, Trade and Industry) in 2020, and

received Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) status from Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) in 2018.

"These accolades underscore our dedication to revolutionising factory operations through automation and digitalisation, while also reflecting our contribution to Malaysia's economic growth and technological progress."





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# Defying the odds in the export sector

FEMALE leadership does have a significant positive impact on business practices across industries, including international trade.

Women bring different experiences, viewpoints, and approaches to leadership, thereby enriching the decision-making process, according to Hernan Corporation Sdn Bhd founder and group chief executive officer Datuk Anna Teo.

"Female leaders often emphasise inclusivity and ethics in their leadership style. They prioritise fairness, diversity, and equal opportunities that result in creating inclusive work environments. This approach, in international trade, promotes ethical business practices, sustainable supply chains, and responsible social and environmental standards.

"Women in leadership often possess resilience, adaptability, and emotional intelligence – crucial traits in managing the complexities of international trade. These qualities enable them to navigate changing global markets, economic fluctuations, and geopolitical challenges effectively," she points out.

Teo was named Woman Exporter of the Year at the Export Excellence Awards 2023 gala night. To her, receiving this achievement meant that the work and sacrifices she has made over the years were recognised.

## Navigating a tough journey

However, being a woman in a leadership position does come with its own set of challenges. They may experience biasness, stereotyping, or discriminatory

practices that can hinder their career advancement.

Additionally, in male-dominated industries like the export sector, women may face limited opportunities for networking or finding role models who have navigated similar challenges.

Teo conquered this by seeking industry associations, professional networks or support groups specifically for women in similar positions. These platforms, she says, can provide valuable connections, mentorship, and guidance.

"Women entrepreneurs in the export sector may face additional difficulties in accessing capital, investment, and resources compared to our male counterparts. "Seeking out financial institutions or organisations that specifically support women-owned businesses can be beneficial. However, I trust in building a solid business plan and seeking out grants, loans or alternative funding options to overcome this challenge and access to funding and resources."

Women in leadership positions often find the need to prove themselves and assert their authority in male-dominated industries; hence, building expertise, cultivating a strong professional network, and continually learning and updating industry knowledge to establish credibility is important, she emphasises.

"It is crucial to acknowledge that these challenges can vary based on individual experiences and specific contexts.

"Overcoming them often requires a combination of personal determination, support



Teo celebrating with her team, after being named Woman Exporter of the Year at the Export Excellence Awards 2023 gala night. — YAP CHEE HONG/The Star

from allies and mentors, advocating for change, and fostering an inclusive work culture that promotes gender equality," Teo highlights.

## A balancing act

It is also no easy feat when it comes to balancing the demands of a successful export business with personal life.

Teo points out the need to prioritise self-care, set boundaries, and seek support in balancing personal and professional responsibilities successfully.

A clear definition and boundaries between their priorities at work and their personal life need to be established.

They also need to surround themselves with a supportive network of family, friends, mentors and colleagues who

understand and respect their aspirations for work-life balance.

"Women often face self-imposed pressure to excel in both personal and professional spheres, which can lead to feelings of guilt or inadequacy when balancing responsibilities becomes challenging.

"Remember that it is essential to prioritise and make choices that align with your values and overall well-being.

"Be realistic, embrace imperfections, and be mindful of self-care," shares Teo, who reminded women to take care of themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally by prioritising activities that help relax and recharge.

It has been a long journey for Teo, who founded Hernan Corporation in 1996, and was

instrumental in its journey to become today's leading manufacturer and exporter of durian products.

The company currently markets and distributes products to countries including Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, China, Canada, and Japan.

Reflecting on being named Woman Exporter of the Year, Teo says that the award comes with a huge responsibility.

"To be a role model and a champion of women, to empower, motivate, encourage, support, and mentor more future women entrepreneurs to be the best that they can be; it is a role I take seriously.

"The Woman Exporter of the Year award made me realise that this is one of the purposes in life," she says.

# Maintaining high standards in halal export

MAC World Group has been in the business of agri-food products since its inception in 2001.

Its appetite for expansion and revenue growth, responding to market demand, and the ambition to build its presence worldwide throughout its journey has made it into a US\$400mil group with operations and offices globally.

Currently, it exports to more than 82 countries across the globe with staff strength of more than 60 in Malaysia and 150 globally, and warehousing facilities of over 7,000sq m in Asia and Africa.

What played a crucial role in the company's success in the international market, apart from innovation, was its short- and long-term strategy using a strategic mapping process to ensure key activities are sustainably supported with resources like talent, knowledge, technology, and financial stability for continuous and resilient growth.

Mac World emerged winner for the Export Excellence Awards 2023's special award for halal products, as well as gold for the Agriculture, Food and Beverage category under the mid-tier and large companies segment.

## Demonstrating halal integrity

According to Mac World chief operations officer Shamsiah Samli, when it comes to maintaining halal certification and standards across different markets, the global recognition of the halal certification issued by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jakim) provides significant advantages to Mac World in meeting demands of the



Shamsiah holding the company's gold trophy for the Agriculture, Food and Beverage category under the mid-tier and large companies segment, and the special award for halal products at the EEA 2023 gala night. — YAP CHEE HONG/The Star

international market.

"With Jakim's reputation and acceptance worldwide, Mac World faces no major obstacles in demonstrating the halal integrity of our products to customers across different countries and regions.

"Moreover, Jakim's recognition of foreign halal certifications brings additional benefits to Mac World. This provides us with a wider range of options

for obtaining high-quality and halal-compliant ingredients for our products.

"By leveraging Jakim's recognition of foreign certifications, we can confidently source raw materials from various countries, ensuring a diverse supply chain that meets the needs of the international market," says Shamsiah.

To ensure the certification remains valid and requirements are consistently met, Mac World established a dedicated halal team that is responsible for overseeing the entire process of obtaining and maintaining the halal certification.

They ensure that all aspects of Mac World's operations, from sourcing raw materials to production and distribution, comply with the strict halal standards set by Jakim so that Mac World's products continue to meet the expectations of halal-conscious consumers in the international market.

## Building trust and loyalty

Additionally, Mac World diligently educates its customers about the importance of using the correct halal logo.

Shamsiah emphasises the cruciality as there were instances where customers requested for logos that have long been present in the local market, despite the risk that these logos could be fake or misused by fraudulent companies.

"Mac World's halal certification from Jakim proved invaluable in overcoming logistical challenges, such as the need for extensive documentation when dealing with important authorities.

"This is due to the global acceptance and recognition of Jakim certification.

Moreover, Mac World's registration on the Jakim website as a certified company facilitated smooth distribution of its products, as it eliminated any potential difficulties that could have been encountered."

Mac World manages the complexities of international trade laws and regulations specific to halal products by ensuring that the entire supply chain, from sourcing to production, comes from recognised halal-certified sources.

This includes providing clear and comprehensive documentation, such as certificates, ingredient lists, and production processes, to meet the requirements of importing authorities.

On how consumer preferences and regulatory requirements in various countries shape their export strategy for halal products, Shamsiah shares that they conduct risk assessment prior to entering new markets.

By doing so, they are able to identify potential challenges and opportunities, allowing them to make informed decisions and develop effective strategies.

Recognising the importance of halal certification in catering to the preferences of Muslim-majority countries, Mac World allocated resources to ensure that all of its brands are halal certified.

"Mac World's commitment to meeting halal standards has contributed to the strong brand reputation we have built in the halal market, positioning us as a trusted provider of high-quality halal products.

"As a result, Mac World has gained the loyalty and trust of halal consumers globally," she points out.





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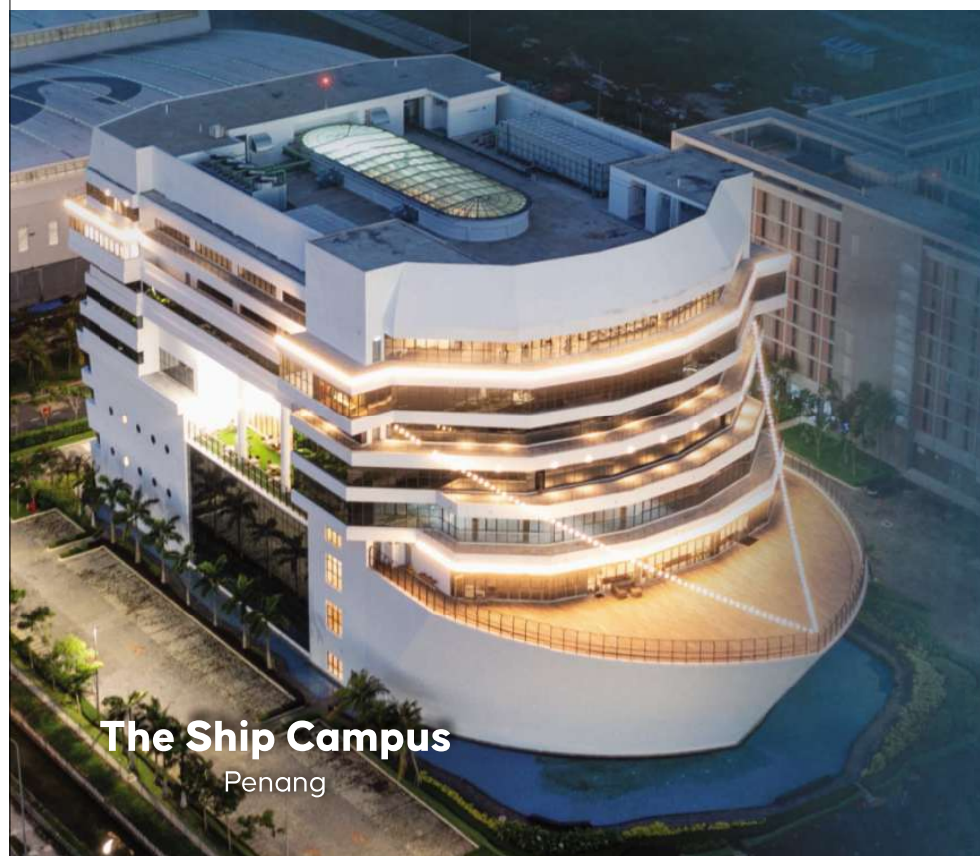
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# Setting new benchmarks in healthcare

ISLAND Hospital, a leading quaternary care establishment located in Penang, Malaysia, added another feather to its cap by recently bagging the Business Achiever Award at the Export Excellence Awards 2023 gala night.

This recognition stands as a testament to the commitment to service that the hospital consistently provides to all its patients, both local as well as health travellers, reinforcing its position as a top-of-mind destination for healthcare services.

Through the years, the hospital has commanded a lion's share of health travellers to the country with a health traveller volume that has historically increased by 10% per annum. By 2023, it had served more than 1.7 million health travellers in total.

Island Hospital's capabilities in catering to the needs of health travellers is in line with its standing as one of four finalists in Malaysia's premier Flagship Medical Tourism Hospital (FMTH) programme.

The programme, which aims to provide the "Best Malaysia Healthcare Travel Experience by 2025", recognises the hospital's contributions in propelling the country into a globally renowned icon for healthcare travel via the delivery of seamless patient experiences anchored on medical excellence, service excellence, best practices and



Island Hospital chief of staff Lim Kooi Ling (second from left) receiving the Business Achiever Award in recognition of the hospital's commitment to delivering quality care to both local and foreign patients.

international branding.

"We are truly honoured to receive the esteemed Export Excellence Award. Not only is it a reflection of our continuing commitment to delivering healthcare services, but it also affirms our efforts as a key contributor in championing medical tourism as a finalist in the FMTH programme," says Island Hospital chief of staff Lim Kooi Ling.

As the only FMTH finalist in the Northern region, Island Hospital plays an integral role in contributing to the nation's

healthcare ecosystem. Under the programme, the hospital undergoes stringent audit and assessment processes by international bodies such as Joint Commission International and IQVIA, with its development being benchmarked against global standards of best practices.

At the heart of Island Hospital's commitment to medical tourism is the development of Island Medical City, a first-of-its-kind fully integrated medical hub.

The official opening of its Peel Wing recently upped its bed



A leading quaternary care provider, Island Hospital welcomed 200,000 health travellers from over 100 countries in 2023.

capacity to 600, and the number is expected to reach 1,000 upon completion of the entire development – enabling the hospital to comfortably accommodate the growing influx of both local and foreign patients.

Another distinctive feature of Island Medical City is its incorporation of a medical suites complex, where healthcare professionals are able to utilise Island Hospital's facilities to grow their practices, allowing Penang and Malaysia to enjoy the advantage of having highly skilled professionals from various medical disciplines under one roof.

With the ongoing development of Island Medical City and the consistent enhancement of its services, Island Hospital is poised for further growth and innovation.

"In our commitment to elevating the standards of patient experiences, we look forward to providing best-in-class patient-centred medical care and services, subsequently reaffirming our position as a leader in healthcare," adds Lim.

■ For details on Island Hospital, log on to [www.islandhospital.com](http://www.islandhospital.com) or <https://www.facebook.com/islandhospitalpenang/>

## Nourishing the future

UTILISING the latest technology in polymer coating, SK Specialties Sdn Bhd can encapsulate high-quality fertilisers with biodegradable micro thin vegetable oil-based polymer membranes, resulting in Controlled Release Fertilizers – a technologically advanced enhanced efficiency fertiliser.

Its flagship SK Cote is an enhanced efficiency fertiliser where the nutrient is released slowly over an extended period, synchronising with the plant's needs over its growing season.

This allows for one-shot application of fertiliser during planting while minimising losses of nutrients to the environment as they are being released slowly, therefore achieving greater efficiency.

It also ensures minimal leaching or environmental pollution while reducing labour requirements, says managing director Adrian Wong.

SK Specialties was awarded Malaysia's Pioneer Status in 2012 and obtained ISO 9001:2015 certification in 2017.

In 2019, the company implemented the 5S system at the workplace.

"Generally, enhanced efficiency fertilisers are limited to a small sector of high-value crops due to its high cost. We are motivated to introduce our high-quality but affordable controlled release fertiliser to the global market as we believe that feeding the world in an efficient and sustainable manner is a priority.



SK Cote is an enhanced efficiency fertiliser where nutrient is released slowly over an extended period.

"By using a low-cost high quality controlled release fertiliser, not only are farmers able to achieve higher yields but also to reduce labour inputs. This is an attractive proposition for farmers and our key to success," says Wong.

### Localisation is key

What was pivotal in the company's success in the international market was the effort put into searching and recruiting key partners in different markets.

"Partners with the best fit are appointed as key distributors in their territories where we invest a lot of time and effort doing research and demonstration plots with local research institutions and farmers to ensure the product works in their local environment.

"This ensures that our product can be demonstrated to work well

with the local climate and crop requirements. We also partner with our key distributors to ensure our product meets local standards.

"However, local rules and regulations can be complex to manoeuvre, especially when there are language barriers, making it an obstacle for us when expanding globally.

"Hence, it is important to take time to fully understand the various implications. Whenever possible, it is best to partner with a local distributor to ensure compliance with the local rules and regulations.

"Sound judgement is required when collaborating with local partners and there should be open discussions to ensure full understanding."

In what ways the global economic landscape has affected



SK Specialties aims to cater to food crops which are crucial to food security as food production faces labour shortages and problems with environmental pollution.

its export business, Wong shares that it was the disruption in global trade supply, either via export barriers or rerouting of trade routes.

A portion of their raw materials are not produced locally, therefore, these disruptions have also affected their export times to other countries.

"A lot of forward planning with our strategic partners is required to ensure adequate stock levels and our goods reach our partners ahead of requirement. We have learnt that strategic flexibility is of utmost importance.

"Being nimble and ever-morphing to the diverse changes in the export environment is key to the pursuit of success in export,

instead of holding fast," highlights Wong, adding that SMEs who plan to break into the export scene should persevere despite the challenging environment in the export business.

Winning silver for the Industrial Products category at the Export Excellence Awards has validated their effort as a team to ensure that their company remains sustainable in export.

"We feel honoured that we have contributed to the nation's economic growth, not only via increased employment but also to the nation's trade balance. We will continue to strive to grow towards excellence," concludes Wong.



# Leading the fight against fire

STEEL Recon Industries (SRI) was founded at a time when the Malaysian firefighting industry was in its infancy.

Back then, the market relied predominantly on imported fire-fighting equipment from Europe and America.

But since the set-up of its first production and assembly lines, the company has never looked back.

Known locally as the pioneer of equipment manufacturing, the company has spent the last five decades perfecting its craft and expanding its product line.

It is now the largest Malaysian exporter of fire equipment and technology and prides itself as being a one-stop shop for both its international and local clients by producing everything from landing valves to fire suppression systems in its own 400,000sq ft facility.

It is one of the few firefighting manufacturers globally that still retains its own iron foundry.

SRI also remains the only Malaysian manufacturer in the industry that holds over 20 global approvals and certifications for European, Asian, American and marine markets, making them the go-to name in international markets for its quality.

Locally, the SRI brand is central to Malaysia's developing infrastructure – its hose reels and cabinets greet visitors as they land in

**“SRI’s production and assembly process provides logistical and cost surety for their customers in today’s post-pandemic economic landscape.”**

Malaysia for the first time, and its fire suppression systems currently protect millions of commuters who ride the MRT2 line.

A glance at Kuala Lumpur’s skyline will also give you an idea as to where else SRI’s products can be found – in skyscrapers such as Menara Kuala Lumpur, Petronas Twin Towers, Tun Razak Exchange and Merdeka 118.

In the past three years, SRI has witnessed global names such as Intel, DHL, and GDS China using its products to protect their data centres and factories.

The company also recognises that progress and expansion should not come at the expense

of the environment.

With growing concerns about global warming leading to countries ratifying agreements such as the Kigali Amendment, SRI has moved along with these developments by beginning the phase out of harmful halon agents, but not at the expense of quality and effectiveness.

It was these concerns that led to the development of SRI’s Streamex, the first and only UL-approved and FM-certified FK-5-1-12 suppression system that is fully assembled in Malaysia.

SRI’s production and assembly process provides logistical and cost surety for their customers in today’s post-pandemic economic landscape.

While only on the market for three years, Streamex has already been installed worldwide in places such as Fiji, Brazil, Hungary and Qatar in infrastructure projects and industries such as logistics, healthcare, hospitality, and manufacturing facilities of MNCs.

As the world transitions into an era driven by technology and environmental awareness, SRI believes that its responsibilities as a manufacturer in the fire-fighting industry extend to providing products equipped to meet the challenges of the future.

This involves not only protecting the next generation locally but also globally.



SRI, with its 400,000sq ft production facility, has become the largest Malaysian exporter of fire equipment and technology.



SRI remains the largest manufacturer of firefighting equipment in Malaysia.



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# Sustainable agri-food making waves globally

IN the ever-evolving landscape of the agri-food industry, Mac World Group has established itself as a prominent player in the market. Founded in 2001 by Abraham Thomas, the group has consistently stood out for its commitment to sustainability, quality and innovation.

With a tagline that epitomises its ethos – “A Sustainable Agri-Food Company” – Mac World has made significant strides in promoting sustainability and delivering high-quality products and services.

## Tapping into growing markets

Mac World also has a strong international presence with numerous offices globally.

In addition to its headquarters in Malaysia, Mac World also has offices in various countries including Singapore, Indonesia, the UAE, Egypt, India, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Tanzania and Nigeria.

This expansive reach allows the group to tap into diverse markets and cater to a wide range of customers, currently exporting to 82 countries.

From its humble beginnings, Mac World has grown exponentially and received numerous accolades for its exceptional performances and contributions to the industry.

The group's ability to export worldwide demonstrates its capacity to adapt to diverse regulatory environments, trade practices and consumer preferences.

This global reach not only showcases Mac World's agility and adaptability but also highlights its commitment to meeting the needs of a wide and varied customer base.

## Products and brands

Mac World boasts a diverse product portfolio, encompassing various market segments that cater to the needs and preferences of a wide range of consumers.

> **Agri-foods:** Mac World offers a range of products including palm oil and palm products, as well as grain, oilseeds, pulses, nuts and spices.

These include raw cashew nuts, sesame seeds and organic spices such as split ginger and split turmeric.

These products not only meet the demands of the industry but also contribute to the global supply chain of essential food products.

Mac World's consumer goods

offerings also cover a wide range of products.

The group's vegetable cooking oil is a staple in many households, while their specialty fats are used in the chocolate and ice cream industry, and bakery fats are essential ingredients for baking delicious treats.

The group also provides oleochemical products that find applications in various industries.

Mac World has introduced multiple brands that cater to different consumer needs such as Mr. Mac, Okaye, Goldstar, Goldfat and Goldfry – which represent their vegetable oil, bakery ingredients and fats, as well as oleochemical products.

Another brand, Golden Farm, offers retail products such as condensed milk and pasta.

These brands ensure that consumers have access to high-quality and reliable products that meet their specific requirements.

> **Eco-friendly products:** Mac World understands the significance of sustainable and environmentally conscious alternative materials.

Within the group, Pick A' Leaf Products Pvt Ltd, specialises in producing biodegradable dish plates made from areca leaves.

These eco-friendly plates, marketed under the Pick A' Leaf brand, have gained popularity among consumers who prioritise sustainability.

The process of creating these plates involves collecting fallen leaves, which are then thoroughly cleaned, moulded, trimmed and sterilised.

This ensures that the final product is hygienic, non-odorous and non-toxic.

Moreover, these plates are lightweight, making them convenient for everyday use.

Notably, the production of these biodegradable plates generates by-products that are not wasted but utilised as valuable resources.

The by-products are either composted to create nutrient-rich manure for soil or used as cattle feed. This sustainable approach ensures that every part of the process contributes to a circular and eco-friendly system.

By offering these biodegradable alternatives, Mac World actively contributes to the reduction of plastic waste and supports the development of a more sustainable future.

> **Superfoods:** Mac World gives high importance to healthy



The Mac World Group Malaysia team.



(From right) Mac World chief operations officer Shamsiah Samli, director Robino Jos Inchody, chief financial officer Jiby Antony, director Sachin Eapen and Thomas.

and nutritious food options. Their brand, Eatopia, is dedicated to providing a range of superfoods that are not only delicious but also promote overall well-being.

These products are carefully crafted to be free from artificial flavours, colours, preservatives, and refined sugars, ensuring that consumers can enjoy them without compromising their health.

Eatopia offers a diverse selection of energy snacks, cereals and spreads that cater to different dietary needs and preferences.

Whether you're a fitness enthusiast, a busy professional or a parent looking for healthier snacks for your children, Eatopia has something for everyone.

These products are created with clean, wholesome and sustainable ingredients, avoiding unnecessary processing and harmful additives.

## Certifications

> **Organic:** Mac World demonstrates its commitment to sustainability through its subsidiaries.

NigMac Nigeria Limited, a certified supplier of organic products by both the EU and USDA, offers organic split ginger and split turmeric, providing customers with high-quality organic options.

These products not only promote environmental sustainability but also have a positive impact on society by providing consumers with healthier and more natural choices.

> **Sustainable palm:** Additionally, Mac World's compa-

nies in Malaysia and Singapore are certified suppliers of palm products, adhering to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) standards.

These certifications ensure that the palm products sourced and supplied by the group meet sustainability criteria.

> **Quality and halal:** Mac World's subsidiaries in Malaysia and Singapore have obtained ISO9001:2015 certification, signifying their adherence to international standards for quality management systems.

This certification demonstrates the group's commitment to maintaining high-quality practices in its operations.

Additionally, these subsidiaries have also obtained halal certification, ensuring that Mac World's products meet the requirements of Islamic dietary laws and are suitable for consumption by Muslim consumers.

> **Food safety:** Pick A' Leaf products are manufactured in a GMP and HACCP-certified factory – meaning that the product is hygienically produced. Eatopia products meanwhile are manufactured in an FSSAI-certified facility.

## Awards and recognitions

Mac World has received numerous accolades for its exceptional performances and contributions to the industry.

Mac World Industries Sdn Bhd has been honoured with the Export Excellence Award on four occasions since 2019, recognising its outstanding achievements in

international trade.

This subsidiary has also been recognised as a Halal Exporter Award winner in 2023, highlighting its dedication to providing halal-certified products.

Additionally, the company has been acknowledged as a Top 10 small and medium enterprise (SME), showcasing its success in Malaysia.

During the Gulfood Exhibition 2023, the Eatopia brand under Mac World's subsidiary, McGill Foods Pvt Limited in India, won the Most Innovative Product under the Best Sauce, Condiment or Preserved category for its honey jam product.

## Strong governance and commitment to excellence

Mac World's strong governance principles are reflected in its transparent and accountable business practices, as the group adheres to ethical standards, regulatory compliance and responsible supply chain management.

With a governance framework in place, Mac World maintains a high level of integrity and promotes a culture of trust and fairness.

Behind the success of Mac World is a dedicated and talented team, led by chief executive officer and managing director Abraham Thomas.

Known for his exceptional leadership, Thomas has fostered an energetic, agile, innovative and talented workforce, that is always ready to take on new challenges and push the boundaries of what's possible in the agri-food industry.





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# Leading the charge in durian exports

MALAYSIA'S largest and leading manufacturer and exporter of durian products, Hernan Corporation Sdn Bhd, has been making waves in the competitive durian export industry.

Led by its dynamic founder and group chief executive officer Datuk Anna Teo, Hernan's success extends globally, particularly in China, where the brand has become synonymous with premium Malaysian durians.

Under Teo's stewardship, Hernan has garnered numerous accolades over the years, including being recognised as the Largest Musang King Durian Plantation by the Malaysian Book of Records in 2023 with strategic partner Sindiyan Plantation, the Star Outstanding Business Award for Best Use of Technology in 2023, Pagoda's China Supplier of the Year in 2022, The Star Export Excellent Awards for Most Promising Corporation in 2017, the Malaysia External Trade Development Corp Export award in 2017 and SME Corp's Top 50 Business Award in 2017.

Teo was also named Woman Exporter of the Year at the Export Excellence Awards 2023, and the MCAH Chinese Elite Dragon Award for Outstanding Chinese Woman Entrepreneur 2023.

Armed with a Master's in Food



Teo, dubbed the "Musang Queen", proudly showing off her Woman Exporter of the Year award. — YAP CHEE HONG/The Star

Studies from the University Toulouse – Jean Jaurès, France, Teo's culinary expertise and passion for Malaysian products spurred her to establish Hernan Corporation in 1996.

Her vision was to transform the company into a fully integrated durian business, exporting fresh and frozen fruits, as well as durian-inspired products and desserts.

Since then, the corporation has expanded its reach globally to fulfil the demand for durians in countries such as Australia, China, Canada, Indonesia, Japan,

Vietnam, the Netherlands, the UAE, the UK and the US.

To cater to the global demand, Hernan also holds the sole distributor rights to several renowned local brands.

Hernan is also one of the first companies to be licensed by China's AQSIQ administration to export durian pulp and durian paste to China.

In 2020, the company set up its own branch in Shanghai to further facilitate the export of its durians and durian products in the country.

Strategic partnerships have also played a crucial role in Hernan's expansion, with collaborations with Sindiyan Plantation Sdn Bhd, as well as active participation in tradeshow and engagement with local authorities.

**Quality assurance**

At the heart of Hernan's triumph lies its efforts to provide premium quality durians, as well as in its product innovation and offerings.

With a reputation for durian and tropical fruit products, Hernan grows its own fruits to ensure the finest quality of its products, with only the highest premium grade of durian varieties grown on its plantations.

The company also employs



Hernan's products are halal-certified, and adhere to regulatory safety standards.

advanced refrigeration techniques, creative product innovation and sustainable practices to meet the global demand for durians and durian-inspired products.

Its reputation for excellence extends beyond durians, as the company distributes local herbs, spices, snacks and confectioneries – all uniquely Malaysian.

A key aspect of Hernan's success lies in its commitment to technological advancement, with a focus on frozen technology, production productivity and AI-assisted quality assurance throughout the entire chain.

Hernan recently launched its very own state-of-the-art Digital AgTech AI-powered Durian Grading System, marking a significant milestone as the first Computer Vision system for the durian industry.

**Premium durian products**

The company's vision for new product development further solidifies its standing in the

durian export market, and also expanding distribution of durian-inspired products in local market.

With aims to produce high-quality durians and durian products, by sourcing the best ingredients from their own farms, Hernan offers a myriad of durian products, including durian varieties such as D24, D197 and D101.

Hernan's diverse product range also showcases its dedication to innovation and customer satisfaction with products such as nitrogen freeze-frozen whole fruit durian, durian pulp, durian-flavoured mochi, fried durian balls, durian pies, durian mooncakes, durian pancakes, and Musang King durian ice cream.

Its products also adhere to regulatory safety standards, as well as are halal-certified.

Today, Hernan's dessert products are available in selected retailer chains in Malaysia and supermarkets overseas.

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MOST of us grew up with the footwear brand Asadi. It has become a staple in households, and a treat to own a pair.

The company that has been making sure we grew up with comfortable and affordable footwear since 1980 is none other than Syarikat Perusahaan Jooi Bersaudara Sdn Bhd.

What started as manufacturing footwear products, especially Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC)/ Ethylene Vinyl Acetate (EVA) sandals and EVA clogs, soon expanded into exporting as well from 1985 onwards.

Today, they export their products to countries in Europe, the Middle East, South America, South Africa, South-East Asia, Japan, the United States and Mauritius.

**The shoe that fits**

What was pivotal in driving the growth and success of the business, especially in the context of expanding their market reach internationally, was customer satisfaction.

“We have been able to meet and exceed market trends and standard requirements of the targeted markets as we have been following them closely for many years.

“We have also participated in international exhibitions since 1991 in major markets. By doing so, we are able to strengthen our brand positioning and image in the industry, garner a wider reach of audience, gain insights, as well as meet new business partners and distributors from different countries,” says Syarikat Perusahaan Jooi

# Leaving lasting footprints



Being compliant with the BSCI Code of Conduct is an important practice in the company’s factory operations.

Bersaudara Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Ng Kiah Hwa.

It is their hard work, persistence and right strategies that have earned them a Most Promising award in the fourth instalment of the Export Excellence Awards (EEA) 2023.

“The reason for our participation is that we wanted to benchmark our company’s business performance against other consumer products exporters which was independently audited by a panel of judges.

“We are very happy and honoured to receive the Most Promising Award and are glad that all the efforts put into growing our business and expanding our brand to markets overseas have been recognised and awarded,” says Ng. That said, Syarikat Perusahaan

Jooi Bersaudara has had its fair share of challenges. Ng shares that skilled workers, pricing and new developments including adapting their products to meet the needs and preferences of new markets, were some of the main challenges that they have encountered.

“But we have gained a lot of experience from these challenges and today we have a strong workforce who are skilled and have the expertise where export is concerned.

“Ultimately, good management and control are crucial for a company’s success as we are able to be competitive internationally for our products.”

**Two steps forward**

Syarikat Perusahaan Jooi Bersaudara has been a pioneer in investing in EVA injection



Ng says customer satisfaction was pivotal in driving the success and growth of the business.

moulding technology since 1999 and in 2017, further invested in the Dual Density EVA injection moulding technology.

This dual-density technology has allowed them to efficiently manufacture and create sandals in two different colours and densities (softness on either top or bottom) in one mould.

Ng says that they have their very own design team to develop new products every season so they can continue to create a wide variety of footwear that will cater to customers of all ages, and across the globe.

They also collaborate with business partners in other regions to create products meant for the locals, thereby tapping into new customer segments.

In the context of sustainability and ethical manufacturing, Ng says that they comply with the

Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) Code of Conduct – a set of principles and values that BSCI participants adhere to in their global supply chains.

“Compliance with the BSCI Code of Conduct is an important practice in our factory’s operations, and simultaneously, being socially responsible for the environment is our top priority. Since 2020, we have installed solar photovoltaic systems that have significantly reduced our carbon footprint.

“We also have our own set of policies to ensure that our workers are treated fairly and their safety prioritised and at the same time be socially responsible for the environment.

“Additionally, our products are shipped to the labs in Europe for physical and chemical testing to ensure there are no safety and performance issues,” Ng highlights.


On the company’s goals for further expansion and growth, Ng says they will continue to participate in international trade fairs and at the same time penetrate emerging markets.

“We have come a long way and have a strong base to pursue our goals with an accumulated wealth of international market experience and production know-how. In the near future, we continue to look forward to our expansion and growth across more markets.”



**SYARIKAT PERUSAHAAN JOOI BERSAUDARA SDN. BHD.**  
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## WORLD-CLASS FOOTWEAR CRAFTSMANSHIP

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# Innovative solutions for a safer workplace

G.B. Industries' products including the Personal Protective Equipment are aligned with industry regulations to ensure safety and protection of the workers.



Glove brand Novax is a globally renowned brand for its quality and performance.



ELECTRICITY serves as a cornerstone of modern life and is indispensable for economic activities. From powering basic light bulbs to driving electronic devices, machinery, and public infrastructure, it plays a central role in our daily existence.

Year by year, total electricity consumption, encompassing both retail sales to consumers and direct usage, continues to climb steadily.

Working with electricity does carry serious risks of shock, arc flash, burn, and other injuries, especially to those who are operating energised electrical systems or equipment.

Having appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) becomes vital as navigating through these energised environments requires not only caution but also the selection of suitable gear that offers both protection and substance.

With a wealth of experience spanning over three decades, G.B. Industries Sdn Bhd, recently honoured with the Exporter of the Year award at the Export Excellence Awards (EEA) 2023, stands as a leading provider of comprehensive solutions for electrical safety requirements.

Specialising in manufacturing essential electrical PPE, particularly rubber-insulating gloves and sleeves under the renowned brand Novax, the company ensures the safety of workers in hazardous and live environments.

Novax, which commenced rubber insulating glove production in 2003, is certified with ISO 9001 and 14001, and its robust Quality Assurance (QA) system is integral to ensuring all products adhere to strict standards in high-risk environments.

According to G.B. Industries sales and marketing manager Aaron Ong, the company specialises in providing electrical safety equipment for workers across various industries.

"Our safety products cater to a broad spectrum of industries, including electrical utility companies, gas metering companies, and oil and gas industries within the utility sector.

"In the industrial sector, our target customers include manufacturing, public transport, and



G.B. Industries Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Ong Boon Kee (in grey tie) and Ong (third from right) together with the team at the A+A exhibition in Germany to showcase their cutting-edge solutions and advancements of their products.

the evolving electric vehicle (EV) industry."

The company offers a diverse range of innovative electrical safety products for workplace environments, including leather protectors, dielectric safety boots, rubber-insulated blankets, glove liners, and line hoses.

"Our products such as rubber-insulated gloves provide a crucial layer of protection against electrical shocks.

"These gloves are designed to insulate workers from electrical currents, thereby reducing the risk of injuries and ensuring a safer work environment."

According to Ong, their products are often used for prolonged periods, resulting in customers emphasising the importance of the comfort, dexterity, and pliability that Novax provides.

## Ensuring the safety of workers

Emphasising innovation in its manufacturing processes, G.B. Industries adheres to stringent global standards such as those set by the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) and European Standard (EN) guidelines.

Its world-class facility, seamlessly integrated with rigorous quality assurance systems, guarantees that all products meet the exacting specifications demand-

ed in high-risk environments ranging from 500V to 36000V.

"To be ASTM- and EN-compliant, our company ensures that every product is subject to strict internal visual inspections, 100% electrical testing within our facility before shipment, third-party audits conducted at our factory, and periodic testing of our products at third-party labs," he explains.

Ong also explains that their products are aligned with industry regulations governed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and equivalent bodies.

"These standards require employers to provide sufficient electrical protective equipment to those working in hazardous environments.

"In live environments where a mistake could be fatal, our products provide an important barrier of protection for these workers."

## R&D to answer industry's needs

Addressing challenges in safety product development and compliance, Ong shares, "We face challenges in developing and maintaining high-quality safety products due to the ever-evolving nature of electrical standards and regulations.

"Additionally, customising

products to meet the specific needs of each industry while maintaining high standards of quality and safety presents ongoing challenges."

To address these challenges, the company allocates substantial resources to research and development, investing in the latest technologies and methodologies.

The company allocates 2% of its turnover to research and development, focusing on improving and introducing innovative safety products.

"We recognise that the effectiveness of safety products extends beyond their design; user knowledge and proper utilisation are important.

"Our product training programmes are comprehensive, covering every aspect of product usage, maintenance, and compliance with industry standards," he elaborates.

## Innovation at its core

To ensure the company stays at the forefront of safety innovation, Ong explains that G.B. Industries adopts an agile product development approach to quickly respond to emerging trends and market demands.

"This flexibility allows us to efficiently integrate new technologies and design enhancements into our safety products.

"Additionally, we work closely with customers to translate their electrical safety needs into reliable and high-performance solutions."

Ong emphasises, "Our commitment to ensuring end-users are adequately trained revolves around respecting their existing expertise.

"We recognise these highly skilled professionals, having received comprehensive training from vocational schools.

"Our approach involves providing targeted support and resources through our global distributor network, ensuring that users have the knowledge and assistance needed for effective utilisation of our safety products."

Highlighting support mechanisms in place, Ong states, "Customers can easily reach out to our support team via email for non-urgent inquiries, ensuring a prompt and efficient response.

"Additionally, our extensive distribution network is strategically positioned to provide local support, offering assistance and solutions for any questions or issues related to our safety products."

On sustainability initiatives, he explains: "In our manufacturing facilities, we've implemented robust water conservation practices, actively recycling and reusing water throughout various production stages.

"This significantly reduces our overall water consumption, minimising the impact on local water resources.

"Additionally, we've invested in solar energy solutions to power a significant part of our manufacturing facilities. By harnessing the sun's power, we reduce our reliance on traditional energy sources and contribute to lowering our carbon footprint."

Through G.B. Industries' unwavering commitment to its expertise, Novax has emerged as a globally renowned brand synonymous with unrivalled quality and unparalleled performance.

Beyond electrical safety products, G.B. Industries also produces heavy-duty chemical-resistant gloves and Glovebox gloves under the Remzbauer brand.

G.B. Industries' products are now present in over 50 countries, reflecting its dedication to providing exceptional solutions on a worldwide scale.

■ To know more about the company, visit [www.gb-intl.com](http://www.gb-intl.com)