

Certification to enhance market access

NMMB scheme to promote the development of Malaysian brands to meet global quality standards has positive effect in increasing the visibility of Malaysian brands locally and abroad



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Since its inception in 2009, SME Corp said has certified 102 companies under its National Mark of Malaysian Brand (NMMB) certification scheme, exceeding its target of 100 companies within five years. The scheme was created to assist SMEs to market their products globally.

To promote the development of Malaysian brands to meet global quality standards, programme partners SME Corp and SIRIM QAS International Sdn Bhd look into various aspects, setting this certification apart from any other schemes in the industry.

Under the audit assessing criteria, the participating company has to be credible in matters such as financial capability, management commitment, operations and marketing. Social responsibility is another important element in the qualifying criteria.

SME Corp works hand in hand with SIRIM QAS International Sdn Bhd in assessing and verifying submissions sent in by applicants.

For the companies to be short-listed, they would first need to fulfil the basic criteria set by SIRIM QAS, the leading certification, inspection and testing body in Malaysia. SIRIM QAS would also come up with approval of panel meeting as well as client renewal agreement.

The application process would take at least a few months from the submission of the application, as there are several steps involved in the process, which include the issuance of the letter of acceptance as well as two stages of auditing by SIRIM QAS.

Other prerequisites for the participation in the scheme include the applicant must have in place an existing quality standards programme such as ISO9000, and achieve a minimum of 3-Star rating under SME Corp's SCORE rating programme. Based on the impact survey conducted by the Secretariat of the SME Brand Development Programme on the NMMB recipients, the findings

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have confirmed the positive effect in terms of increasing the visibility of Malaysian brands locally and abroad.

Currently, Malaysia is in the process of registering the NMMB as a trademark in 11 countries, 8 of these countries are in Asia. The 11 countries are Netherlands, India, China, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Aus-

tralia and the United States. Due to varying legislation and registration processes that need to be followed, the status of the mark's registration in each country may differ.

According to SME Corp, it is important for companies to know its target market well, and since the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) will commence next year, they should focus on Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines, as they are Malaysia's top five export destinations within ASEAN.

Malaysia's top three export destinations in the European Union (EU) and West Asia are the Netherlands, Germany and the UK.

Referring to the number of certified companies under the scheme, SME Corporation Malaysia chief executive officer Datuk Hafsa Hashim said, "This is not about numbers but the quality of companies particularly with good brands that we want to bring to the international market."

She added that companies that have been awarded certification by SME Corp have increased their sales from 5% to up to 30% annually, due to enhanced market access domestically and internationally.

One of the recipients of NMMB that has benefitted from the scheme is Delta Perdana. Its managing director Borhanuddin Ramli told MALAYSIA SME, "Branding is extremely important as it is a good leveller for SMEs created for better competition."

Speaking on the very stringent evaluation exercise that they have to follow in order to be short listed, Borhanuddin said, "We understand the reason behind that. We are a producer of precision products which require a lot of technical

guidelines.

"Furthermore, if it is too easy to be chosen, everybody can have it and the winners won't have the competitive advantage anymore," he added.

Delta Perdana is a manufacturer of water meters and have been servicing major clients from Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Sabah.

The company claimed that the certification has provided a good platform for export and now the company has marketed its products to countries like the Philippines and Vietnam.

For Delta Perdana, it has been a tradition for the company to organise an annual "gotong-royong" and a blood donation campaign, and that was one of the plus points for the company, as the activities fall under social responsibility and they carry some weight when it comes to getting the NMMB certification.

For the companies receiving the

certification, 50% of the total cost charged by SIRIM for the audit and certification process will be borne by SME Corp.

On top of that, certified companies are also eligible for monetary incentives under the Green Lane Business Accelerator Programme. SMEs would also have access to ongoing local and international trade activities by MATRADE as well as invitation to specific training opportunities organised by SME Corp and partners, and media coverage.

At the moment, out of the 87 accreditation recipients come from the manufacturing sector and 15 from the services sector.

In getting more companies to participate in the scheme, nationwide road shows have been conducted to inculcate the importance of branding to SMEs. This year, the road show began in November and end December. MSME