

focus

MIHAS Success A Lesson In Perseverance

MIHAS Chief Executive Officer Mohd. Shukri Abdullah

There is no stopping Mohd. Shukri Abdullah when he gets going and in the afterglow of the success of the Third Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS) 2006 ideas are spewing out of him faster than he can articulate it.

As MIHAS Chief Executive Officer, Mohd. Shukri has every reason to be elated, as interest in halal products and services have caught on and people from all corners of the globe are zooming in on Malaysia as the focal point.

MIHAS 2006 attracted 27,523 visitors from 60 countries with 505 booths taken up by participants from Malaysia (378 booths) and 19 countries including Iran, Thailand, Indonesia, the United States of America and Netherlands.

With 12,511 trade visitors, mostly from Singapore, China, Indonesia, South Africa and Philippines, and 164 trade buyers from 26 countries flown in by Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) resulted in total sales of RM168.3 million with more to come.

MIHAS is organised by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), MATRADE, Ministry of Entrepreneur and Cooperative Development (MECD), and the Islamic Dakwah Foundation Malaysia (YADIM).

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– Mohd. Shukri Abdullah, MIHAS CEO

In fact many exhibitors have already placed bookings for MIHAS 2007 to be held from May 9 to 13 next year, adds a relieved Mohd. Shukri as he relates the steep learning curve everyone went through.

A seasoned marketer who learned the ropes in various industries for 11 years, he decided to establish Indah



Mohd. Shukri Abdullah, MIHAS CEO

Profiles Sdn. Bhd., a company that gained recognition for publishing a book on “Halal Malaysia, Islamic Capital Market and Financial Services.”

This book, Mohd. Shukri explains, showcase Malaysia’s strength in the Islamic economic environment as it highlighted all the “halal” companies listed on Syariah Index of the then Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange.

Operating under the non-profit YADIM, Indah Profiles distributed the book free to participants of the 10th OIC Summit in 2003 and later caught the eye of several influential individuals. Further discussions with Tan Sri Lee Kim Yew, CEO of Mines, sparked the idea for MIHAS.

“There were other halal shows held with varying degree of success. While we made a few mistakes initially this has proven to be our strength. We managed to get 500 booths in the first MIHAS in 2004.

“To his credit, Tan Sri Lee’s support and guidance kept us going because he firmly believed that MIHAS is good for the nation. The Government decided to step in for the third MIHAS and this has led to even bigger success.



OFFICIAL OPENING ...MIHAS 2006 was opened by Deputy Prime Minister YAB. Dato' Ser Najib Tun Razak (middle). With him are (right) Mohd. Shukri Abdullah, MIHAS Chief Executive Officer and (left)Chairman of the Islamic Dakwah Foundation Malaysia Datuk Mohd. Nakhaie Ahmad.

"This success is a result of the strategies we used that has branded MIHAS with Malaysia today. People sometimes don't realise this but we are still here today because of mistakes we made early on," Mohd. Shukri humbly admits.

Refusing to divulge the biggest "mistake" that turned into a valuable lesson, the unshakable Mohd. Shukri elaborates that MIHAS is essentially about marketing. The biggest challenge was changing perceptions.

Many perceived halal as confined only to food and few came forward in the beginning as they were sceptical that there was even such a thing as a global "market" for halal products and services.

Undeterred, MIHAS organisers persevered and kept talking to anyone willing to listen because, as an enthusiastic marketer, Mohd. Shukri explains, it was sincere passion to see the halal market become a reality that kept us energised.

He adds, "These sceptics are now among those who say they will be coming to MIHAS again next year because they had to accept that MIHAS is where the halal trade flows. MIHAS has positioned Malaysia as the global halal hub.

"Marketing is about perceptions. It is about making people believe. When we started MIHAS there was no real

halal market. Now we promote that the global halal market is worth an estimated US\$500 billion."

Future plans include educating the public through a television programme that will touch on every aspect of a halal lifestyle, and research to gather data on the halal market as this will drive future marketing strategies.

Perseverance is the key that has transformed MIHAS into the gateway through which businesses can shape future market directions and Mohd. Shukri invites all Malaysian companies to join him. ■

Fast Facts On MIHAS

1. WHAT IS MIHAS?

MIHAS, Malaysia International Halal Showcase, is the world's largest international trade fair for the marketing and procurement of global quality halal certified products or consumables. It is also Malaysia's largest exhibition for food & beverage products.

2. WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF MIHAS?

The all-encompassing mission of MIHAS is to position Malaysia as a country that effectively shapes the global halal market, serves the global Muslim community and acts as a platform for the global halal network by making halal products easily accessible for Muslims.

3. WHY THE IMPORTANCE OF HALAL?

Muslims adhere to a strict code of religious dietary law of the permissible (halal) and the forbidden (haram) and strives to observe them. According to the Holy Quran, to be considered halal, products must also be wholesome, clean and safe for human consumption. The most basic halal principles revolves around products that are totally free from pork, intoxicants (alcohol) and animals not slaughtered in the name of God by qualified Muslims.

The strict observation of halal practices as well as the advent of modern quality management and food safety assurance system has led to an encouraging growth of halal certification bodies around the world. This is important as the modern consumables industry utilises food chemicals, stabilisers, colourings or emulsifiers that are often derived from 'haram' or dubious substances to enhance product quality or taste. There is now greater awareness among the Muslims of these facts. Thus, the high quality and safety aspects required by the certification of halal products offer reassurance to those of the Muslim faith, creating an encouraging demand for quality halal products.

4. WHY IS IT HELD IN MALAYSIA?

Malaysia goes a step further in the halal certifying process of products. It aims to lead and enforce the certification process by direct audit and periodical spot checks, making Malaysian halal products readily recognised, respected and sought after by Muslims in any part of the world.

Malaysian entrepreneurs have long pioneered the halal industries, placing them apart from the rest of the world

in the variety of halal products that they have made available. In providing the world with a complete halal solution, and by virtue of being at the heart of ASEAN, the MIHAS initiative has determined halal sources for global food production.

5. WHO ARE THE ORGANISERS?

MIHAS is jointly organised by the Ministry of International Trade & Industry (MITI), the Ministry of Entrepreneur & Cooperative Development (MECD), MATRADE and The Islamic Dakwah Foundation Malaysia (YADIM) with the full support from the Government of Malaysia. MIHAS is professionally managed by Indah Profiles Sdn. Bhd. in direct collaboration with the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and the State Islamic Development Department (JAIN).

6. WHEN WILL THE MIHAS 2007 SHOWCASE BE HELD?

MIHAS 2007 will be held from May 9 to May 13 at the Malaysia International Exhibition & Convention Centre (MIECC), MINES Resort City in Kuala Lumpur. Register online at www.halal.com.my ■

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