

# Greater KL attracts multinationals to expand their regional activities

Despite the global pandemic, multinational companies (MNCs) such as International SOS (M) Sdn Bhd and Huntsman Global Business Services Sdn Bhd are in the midst of developing highly-skilled services to support their regional operations and/or regional clients. This came about as these MNCs have successfully leveraged Greater KL's local talent pool, enabling infrastructure and support from government agencies and policies that aim to develop the country's digital capabilities.

"As a health and security services provider, most of our investments are to develop our human capital. At the moment, about 50% of our employees are medical professionals. Over the years, we have enabled our local talent to learn and take over from our foreign employees and I am proud to say that almost our entire workforce, of about 450, are locals," says David Ng, managing director of International SOS Malaysia and Myanmar.

"Furthermore, our Malaysian talent has gone on to take up roles in Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, China and other countries. In a way, International SOS is an exporter of Malaysian talent and this reflects our longstanding contribution towards building a vibrant business ecosystem in the country that includes the creation of highly-skilled job opportunities for Malaysians," he adds.

International SOS is the world's leading health and security services company with a global clientele in more than 1,000 locations across 90 countries. In Malaysia, International SOS operates in more than 90 sites. Its main office, which houses the company's Asia Response Centre (ARC), is based in KL Sentral. Calls from International SOS' clients, mainly from offshore operations in Asia-Pacific, are directed and handled by ARC.

"The ARC is the heart of our operations, operating 24/7. This is where our clients connect with our emergency-trained medical doctors. We also have medical professionals including doctors, nurses and medics providing medical support at our clients' sites. This includes offshore sites for our clients in the oil and gas industry as well as onshore locations, for example, at our clients' manufacturing facilities. Our clients across various industries operating around the world prefer to call our Assistance Centre (AC) or ARC for different health and medical services regardless of where they are physically," says David.

Huntsman, a global differentiated and speciality chemicals company, is looking to grow its global and regional Asia-Pacific (APAC) global business services (GBS) hubs, located in The Pinnacle Sunway, Bandar Sunway, by developing the capabilities of its employees, increasing its talent pool and investing in advanced technology.

According to Sunil Rajamony, GBS Global and Regional Hub Leader and Director of Accounting Shared Services APAC, Huntsman plans to hire about 100 employees over the next three years. This is in line with the company's plans to provide higher value support such as end-to-end process management and automation for Huntsman's regional and global operations.

"Huntsman has been in Malaysia for many years. The GBS operations started with an internal audit function in 2007 and this has grown over the years. We started supporting accounting functions in 2010 and moved on to IT functions in 2014. Our local team's capabilities have also grown and we currently support Huntsman's global and regional operations in different time zones. We have a critical team here and they have proven to be capable and competent," says Sunil.

Huntsman's GBS operations currently provides strategic and transactional IT, accounting, finance and internal audit services to their counterparts located across the region.

**Developing cutting-edge technologies in KL**  
Before the outbreak of the coronavirus in early 2020,

Suitable conditions, including support from InvestKL, enables MNCs to utilise advanced technology to offer highly-skilled services to their counterparts and clients across the region



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International SOS was providing remote medical care to their clients through tele-medicine capabilities. With the onset of the pandemic, the demand for tele-medicine consultation increased tremendously.

"We believe that Covid-19 has caused a long-term structural shift in the digital healthcare sector. We are responding to increasing demand for virtual medical services by offering tele-consultation via digital tools such as our International SOS Wellbeing App and through our ARC. Our tele-medicine services are currently used by our clients on offshore sites," says David.

"With this digital capability, we can diagnose a patient, establish the condition that he or she is in and offer appropriate recommendations remotely. Our service goes beyond a video call. We have suitable equipment on site and trained personnel who know how to use this equipment. Information that is collected remotely is conveyed to the doctors in our ARC, located in KL, and they are able to decide



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on the next course of action for the patient. By enabling a more accurate assessment of patients, tele-medicine services can save lives," explains David.

International SOS has plans to expand its tele-medicine services to clients on onshore sites.

"We are able to offer such advanced digital health services because our local talent pool was able to pick up the skills needed to operate the necessary equipment quickly. Strong network connectivity found in KL was another contributing factor. A supporting infrastructure is a necessity for such services and we are looking forward to the rollout of 5G in the country as this will enhance our tele-medicine service," explains David.

Besides tele-medicine, International SOS is also in the midst of developing other advanced digital solutions in the country. One innovation is the Wellbeing App used by their client's employees, that encourages a healthy lifestyle and provides preventative information on how to reduce the risk of contracting non-communicable diseases.

"Development, support and enhancements to these digital solutions are done by local service providers together with our subject matter experts. International SOS has always worked with local partners to enhance our services. We partner with over 2,500 clinics, hospitals and logistic providers across the country, so we are a big part of the local

healthcare ecosystem," he says.

The apex of Huntsman's plans for its GBS centre is an investment in cutting-edge technological tools such as automation, data analysis, intelligent technology and robotic process automation (RPA).

"We will also be heavily focusing on Lean Six Sigma, a process improvement methodology designed to eliminate problems, remove waste and inefficiencies while improving working conditions. So, we are not just expanding physically but also building our skills and high-end capabilities. The functions that we provide to regional counterparts will continue to expand and will include purchasing, credit, treasury, human resources and legal resources," says Sunil.

"By leveraging advanced technology, we can provide an agile service delivery model. This way, the local operation will offer strategic and operational benefits globally, such as scaling up the integration of new business units quickly if there is a merger or acquisition."

## A supportive base for higher-value services

Huntsman's biggest shared services operations in the world will be based in KL. While there are other Huntsman-GBS sites around the world, Sunil says, the decision was made to leverage and build on the existing capabilities of the local operations.

"A comprehensive assessment was done to select the right location to grow Huntsman's GBS. We have a solid base here and it made business sense to leverage existing capabilities. Furthermore, the cost of business in Greater KL is reasonable and there is adequate supporting infrastructure such as broadband facilities. KL is a geographically strategic location and it is easy for us to access other regional cities. So, it made a lot of sense to establish Huntsman's next-generation GBS here," says Sunil.

Meanwhile, David points to a multi-lingual talent pool as a contributing factor behind the growth of International SOS's local operations and development of its value-added services. "We based our regional operations in Malaysia because of its infrastructure, legal system, supportive government policies and legislation, attractive financial and tax incentives but, most importantly, because of the multi-talented workforce here," says David.

Sunil agrees that access to a strong talent pool had benefited Huntsman. The company has established relationships with local institutes of higher learning and receives several undergraduates who intern with the company every year.

"We have a strong and highly competitive internship programme, and many of those who intern with us come back and join us as full-time employees when they graduate. I believe that we have established a win-win partnership with a number of institutes of higher learning in Malaysia," says Sunil.

As with International SOS, there are also opportunities to work for Huntsman's operations in other countries. For example, Sunil was working for Huntsman in Belgium before returning to head the internal audit function in Greater KL.

Huntsman's local GBS centre will soon move to a bigger modern office that is designed to be open, integrated, creative and inspiring. "The new office has a modern design with elements such as huddle rooms that are aimed to get small groups to collaborate on innovative ideas. We hope to provide an environment that all employees will find exciting and inspiring. The objective is to empower our associates with access to the best tools in a conducive work environment, so they have a competitive edge and are able to provide the best-in-class service," says Sunil.

InvestKL had been instrumental in assisting Huntsman and International SOS in the past and is poised to continue playing a supportive role as these companies offer, and export, even more value-added services.