

Powering GE forward globally from Kuala Lumpur

For General Electric Co (GE), Kuala Lumpur was the obvious location when it decided to set up a regional IT support team in 2018. Three years later, its decision has proved to be more than justified, as the team — one of only four in the world — is handling 30% of the workload globally, says Abdul Rahman Abu Haniffa, director of government affairs and policy at GE Malaysia.

“Even during Covid-19, our efficiency was maintained. We did 20% to 25% above baseline volume and our numbers were higher this year than they were last year,” says Abdul Rahman. “Even though we had that many more contacts (25% more than usual), the team’s performance and efficiency were not affected.”

The establishment of the Kuala Lumpur IT team is another exciting chapter in GE’s long history in Malaysia. Since setting up shop in the nation 45 years ago, GE has grown its local workforce to 1,200 employees, representing every aspect of the US Fortune 500 company’s businesses: power, renewable energy, aviation and healthcare.

Its customers include the biggest names in Corporate Malaysia: Tenaga Nasional Bhd, Malakoff Corp Bhd and Sarawak Energy Bhd in power generation, AirAsia Group Bhd in aviation as well as the Ministry of Health and National Heart Institute in the medical equipment segment.

That is why having a strong internal support structure is critical to GE’s business. Kuala Lumpur was attractive not only because of its high-potential market and GE’s existing presence but also its strategic location in Southeast Asia, absence of natural disasters as well as large talent pool, which includes the ability to support multiple languages across the region.

“The city’s attractions, strong infrastructure, taxation regime, abundance of business opportunities, rich talent pool and immigration policy make it the ideal location for our IT team.”

“The Kuala Lumpur IT team plays a significant role in GE’s IT support because it is strategically located within our Asia operations and allows us to provide expert-level IT support to our employees globally,” says Abdul Rahman.

He adds that, regionally, the Kuala Lumpur IT team supports four main languages: Mandarin, Japanese, Korean and English. The team also provides support to GE employees worldwide, predominantly in English.

Abdul Rahman credits investment promotion agency InvestKL’s assistance and facilitation efforts with helping the Kuala Lumpur IT team get up and running. In fact, InvestKL is often GE’s go-to agency for assistance, particularly now as the Covid-19 pandemic rages on.

“Invariably, various GE businesses’ operations and expansion plans require some government touchpoint and, often, InvestKL is our first point of contact. In terms of getting assistance, agencies such as InvestKL under the Ministry of International Trade and Industry have certainly been there for us and have helped us make informed decisions and facilitated our landing,” says Abdul Rahman.

Tapping Malaysia’s digitalisation drive

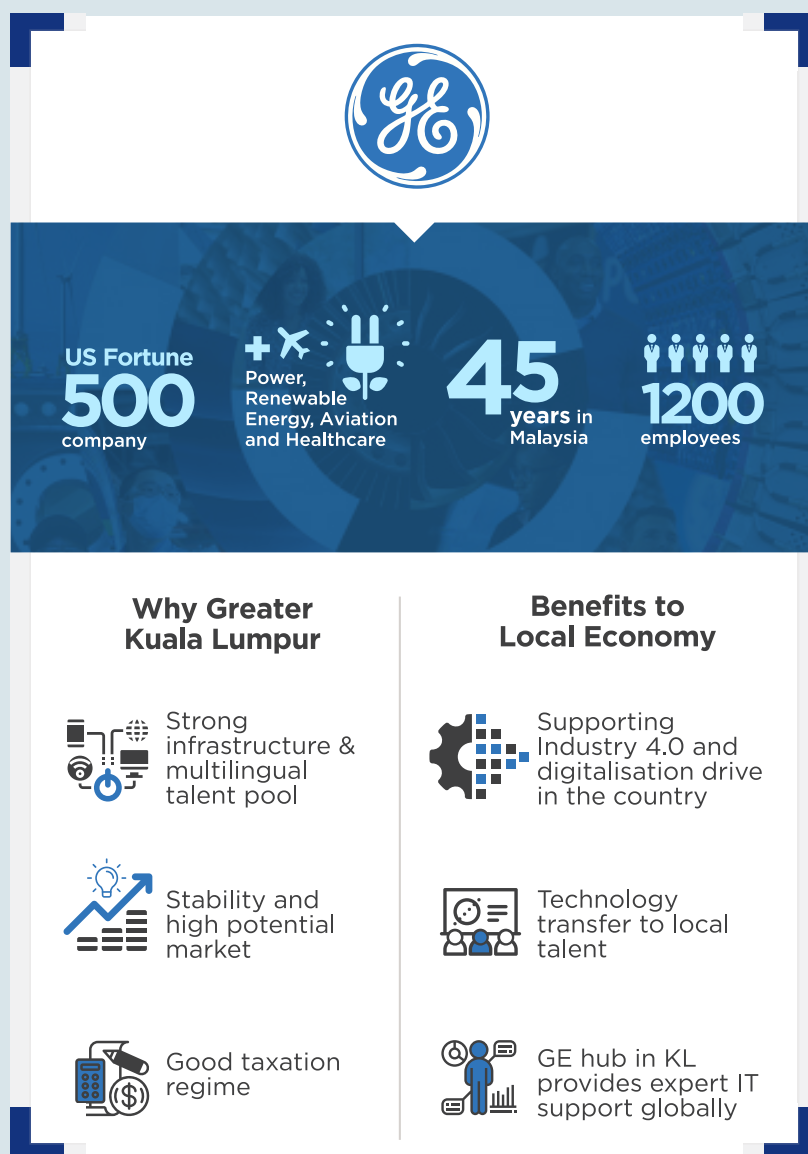
Another factor in GE’s choice of Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia is the country’s strong digitalisation push and Industry 4.0 adoption drive. These initiatives result in an evolving ecosystem that provides an exciting technology environment for GE’s various businesses.

On the flip side, it is also a win-win proposition for the country, as GE’s presence supplies global talent and capabilities to the domestic environment.

“Malaysia’s broadband and power infrastructure is stable, and our cybersecurity capabilities are strong,” says Abdul Rahman. “Malaysia is no longer a country where there is power disruption for two to three hours, affecting the international support processes. Today, our global support is

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— Abdul Rahman



a benchmark and that’s good for the country’s investment prospects.”

As for the KL team, GE is focusing on continuous investment in its biggest asset — people. Since the formation of the team, GE has been committed to employing local talent even when expanding its support languages to Japanese and Korean.

Abdul Rahman says the individual team members have been growing in terms of skills and knowledge. This continuous growth has enabled GE to merge its first- and second-level support, as first-level service desk agents have advanced from only supporting users with basic help to resolving more technical issues.

As a group, the team has come a long way. One particular challenge was adapting to different workstyles in regions beyond Asia in terms of providing timely and seamless support.

“For example, working styles in Europe are very different from those in Malaysia and Asia. We need to know how to support communities from different countries within Europe. Of course, the scheduling and context is different. However, our refined coverage strategy of mov-

ing from a global footprint to a supra-regional footprint has helped resolve such challenges,” says Abdul Rahman.

Growing existing talent

So, what’s next for the Kuala Lumpur GE IT team? According to Abdul Rahman, the focus is not on growing headcount but growing the existing talent to uplift their value and income in addition to equipping them with the right tools for their work.

He says GE is continually investing in better technology and tools to enable the team to provide the best support possible to its customers. The latest milestone was the implementation of omnichannel support so that the team can provide a smooth and fully integrated user experience.

“So, we don’t need to expand in terms of headcount, but we do in terms of tools and skill sets. We are also growing our teams in terms of income. As the skills go up, the income goes up.”

“We believe in investing in our people and deepening the knowledge and capabilities of our team’s specific area of expertise. We have been and will continue to invest in upskilling employees.”

InvestKL continues creating value in economy by attracting high-value MNCs to Greater KL

InvestKL’s mission to attract 100 multinational companies (MNCs) to Greater Kuala Lumpur was accomplished ahead of its end-2020 deadline. It is now building on the immense work over the past decade to draw the next 100 MNCs.

Set up in 2011, InvestKL has succeeded in achieving its objective and emerged as a trusted and proven partner for multinational investors looking for the next geographical engine of global growth.

Asia is on track to top 50% of global gross domestic product and drive 40% of global consumption by 2040, representing a decades-long shift in the global economic centre of gravity. And nowhere is Asia’s potential more exciting than in Southeast Asia, the melting pot of about 700 million people that houses some of the world’s most promising developing economies.

Kuala Lumpur, strategically located in the heart of Southeast Asia, is an investor’s dream gateway to tapping that growth story. In addition to a world-class infrastructure, stable regulatory environment and geographical security from natural disasters, the city also boasts a multilingual talent pool ready to be mobilised in support of global operations across borders, cultures and time zones.

“Attracting the next 100 companies will be an exciting phase as we widen our reach to target high-growth companies that are technology-driven, innovative yet sustainable. These high-value, high-impact and high-tech investments complement the national priorities that seek to achieve long-term economic success,” says InvestKL CEO Muhammad Azmi Zulkifli.

InvestKL’s journey of promoting the competitive advantages offered by Kuala Lumpur as an investment destination has translated into a total investment sum of RM15.2 billion, of

which 69% are realised. The investments have created 15,000 regional high-skilled jobs, with 82% filled by Malaysians, who earn an average annual income of RM108,000.

In turn, MNCs gain a diverse multilingual and multicultural workforce with strong ties to different cultures worldwide, which means well-rounded readiness and adaptability for global challenges.

While the investments meant job opportunities and better employment prospects for Malaysians, they also created an inclusive and sustainable future for the nation. With the technology and knowledge transfer brought in by the MNCs, innovation activities are also mushrooming in Greater KL as the agency enhances the investor ecosystem to facilitate more R&D and innovation-driven investments with the Greater Kuala Lumpur Live Lab in the works.

Looking ahead, InvestKL is not resting on its laurels. Its team is already in conversations with global MNCs and unicorns with a promising pipeline of leads in its efforts to continue promoting Kuala Lumpur as the top investment destination in the region.

“Despite unpredictable times in the Covid-19 pandemic, we see healthy interest from numerous companies in the target sectors. This is positive and keeps the team optimistic that we can continue to achieve our yearly targets. More importantly, this reflects investors’ confidence, an advantage we will pursue aggressively to shift investment decisions towards Greater KL. The city has great potential for further growth, and we have seen its outstanding transformation as a business location over the last 10 years. The next milestone will see Greater KL as the undisputed investment location in Asia-Pacific,” says Azmi.

GE Malaysia director of government affairs and policy Abdul Rahman Abu Haniffa can attest to Kuala Lumpur’s ideal location. He recounts how the global health crisis caused border closures, travel restrictions and supply chain disruptions that affected many industries, including the gas and power business.

“We have had a lot of advisory and process support from InvestKL to ensure minimal disruption to GE’s different businesses. Greater KL is truly the perfect location for us to continue operating our business amid these challenging times and we are confident we have made the right choice,” he says.



Azmi: The city has great potential for further growth