



SUCCESS STORIES OF MNCs VOL. 5



BACKGROUND

Greater Kuala Lumpur (Greater KL) offers great opportunities for foreign multinational companies looking to tap into growth in Malaysia and across Asia.

In Success Stories of MNCs Vol.5, we showcase some of the best organisations within the Fortune 500 and Forbes 2000 list at the top of their industry, and how they engage and thrive within Greater KL's ecosystem.

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MEIKO Established Regional HQ for Southeast Asia in Greater KL

The multilingual skills of Malaysians, ease of setting up and doing business, having good digital potentials and yet still at a reasonable cost are among the factors MEIKO chose the city as its home base in Southeast Asia.

Malaysia is no foreign place for the MEIKO Group, a German-based warewashing technology producer, as its first project here was back in 1993, installing warewashing facilities at the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Airport, then Kuala Lumpur's international airport.

However, it was in 2012 that MEIKO decided to set up a regional hub in

Southeast Asia. After considering suitable locations such as Bangkok and Singapore, the group decided to locate its regional headquarters for Southeast Asia and South Korea in Kuala Lumpur.

So, what attracts a company that started out of a garage in the Black Forest area by Oskar Meier and Franz Konrad in 1927 to set up a Southeast Asian hub in Kuala Lumpur, beating other economic hubs in the region?



Rudolf Kitzbichler,
managing director
of MEIKO Clean
Solutions (SEA)
Sdn Bhd

Rudolf Kitzbichler, managing director of MEIKO Clean Solutions (SEA) Sdn Bhd, says the multilingual skills of Malaysians, ease of setting up and doing business, having good digital potentials and yet still at a reasonable cost are among the factors MEIKO chose the city as its home base in Southeast Asia.

“If you look at the geographical location of Kuala Lumpur, it is the most centrally located city among the major economic hubs of Southeast Asia. You are able to reach every spot in the region in less than four hours.

“And if you look at the bigger picture, within Asia itself, you can fly to Dubai, Tokyo or Sydney in less than seven hours. That’s what I would call a central location within Asia,” says Rudolf Kitzbichler.

MEIKO’s journey over the last nine decades

MEIKO is a technology company with warewashing solutions installed in over 90 countries worldwide and 20 subsidiaries, with a workforce strength of 2,500.

Having already set up hubs in other regions, MEIKO had its eyes set on Southeast Asia and South Korea. It wanted to be closer to its clients in this region and therefore required a regional hub from where it could serve its customers. “While our good name MEIKO is recognised worldwide through our innovative technology, it is the quality of our professional services that has really given us lots of long-term partnerships, because only a working machine is a valuable machine. To reach this, we are close to our business

MEIKO



German based
warewashing solutions
tech producer



Group total revenue of
EUR375mil



Over 90 countries
worldwide, workforce
strength of
2,500

WHY GREATER KL



Centrally located among
major economic hubs



Multilingual talent



Ease of doing business



“If you look at the geographical location of Kuala Lumpur, it is the most centrally located city among the major economic hubs of Southeast Asia. You are able to reach every spot in the region in less than four hours.”

— Rudolf Kitzbichler, managing director of MEIKO Clean Solutions (SEA) Sdn Bhd

BENEFITS TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY



Southeast Asia regional hub in Kuala Lumpur



Conducts R&D involving understanding the local culture & food habits



Plans for assembly facility

partners; we understand quite well what drives them, what concerns them and what adds value to their business – we are in constant dialogue to help solve their needs.”

The SEA hub does not only develop a sales and service network for MEIKO but also involves research and development, says Rudolf Kitzbichler. The R&D that takes place at MEIKO SEA involves understanding the local culture and food habits.

For example, the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre uses very big food-sharing plates. MEIKO SEA conducts R&D into test washing the big food-sharing plates under real conditions with the right chemical combination to make sure the items are hygienically cleaned and dried.

MEIKO's R&D foothold in Kuala Lumpur

MEIKO started some partnerships with universities like KDU & Taylors University on the foodservice section and with University Teknologi Petronas from a digital aspect. It also actively supports a non-governmental organisation here in Malaysia – Food Aid Foundation. It is trying its best to educate the local F&B scene and healthcare segment on hygienic solutions and standards and sharing its global experience and knowledge with the community.

“Our Malaysian team is very responsible, which could be seen during the Covid lockdown, and we are thankful to have such a great team

with good team spirit,” says Rudolf Kitzbichler.

“Being able to find talent that can speak German is a bonus. We have a young Malaysian general manager here – who is 35 – leading the team and a MEIKO Academy manager doing a great regional job. Two of our employees have also studied in Germany. They speak some German, which is great to communicate with our team in Germany.”

InvestKL supports MEIKO during Covid-19 pandemic

During the Covid-19 pandemic, borders were shut, causing travel for MEIKO engineers and technicians to be halted and ongoing work to be suspended. InvestKL assisted the company to secure all the necessary approvals from the authorities in both countries to arrange for the travelling of the company's engineers to Jeju, South Korea.

“InvestKL supported us greatly by connecting us to the local Immigration Department, to allow our engineers to fly to [South] Korea and also come back into Malaysia again. Of course, all necessary quarantine rules were followed,” says Rudolf Kitzbichler.

“It has been seven years since we decided to make Malaysia our regional hub, and we are planning to stay here for good. So right now we have started to think about our future plans.”

Source: The Edge



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Why Kuala Lumpur is SRKay's Perfect Launch Pad into ASEAN Region

For SRKay to tap the potential of the next global growth engine, it requires the perfect launch pad. Kuala Lumpur ticked all the boxes.

When private equity firm SRKay Consulting Group chose to set up its first overseas office in Kuala Lumpur in 2019, it was not for sentimental reasons. The business case, from the company's perspective, was clear and compelling.

"Asean is growing fast. Asia alone offers a 3.2 billion middle-class population as a humongous addressable market by 2030 and about one-fifth or 664 million of them live in the Asean region," says SRKay spokesman Karunjit Kumar Dhir.

And that gigantic market is matched by US\$8 trillion (RM34.2 trillion) in new infrastructure across Asia by 2020, with the Asean economy alone worth a whopping US\$2.7 trillion, he adds.

The rapid growth presents many opportunities for innovation and disruptive ideas that SRKay looks to invest in. Its key focus areas include talent, employability, employee productivity, rapid reskilling and automation.



SRKAY



A high value MNC investing in innovative seeds, high-potential and early-stage opportunities and ideas



Global presence spanning five countries and two continents, with Kuala Lumpur office being the first and its only ASEAN outpost



90%
of the fast-growing headcount in Kuala Lumpur office consists of local Malaysian talent working mostly on the advanced technology stack



Kuala Lumpur setup to be positioned as a massive learning hub, with new regional focus teams being setup to operationalise & scale business in ASEAN

“Speaking from a purely business perspective, our base in Kuala Lumpur is a gateway for us to the region and will help us realise better returns on our investment and scale faster within Asean.”

— Karunjit Kumar Dhir, SRKay spokesman

SRKay is the private equity arm of SRK Exports, India's largest diamond exporter. Its office in Kuala Lumpur, opened in April 2019, adds to a global presence spanning five countries across three continents.

For SRKay to tap the potential of the next global growth engine, it requires the perfect launch pad. Kuala Lumpur ticked all the boxes.

Logistically, Kuala Lumpur, with its excellent regional connectivity and good local infrastructure, made perfect sense, Karunjit says.

He adds that a stable socio-economic environment, healthy economy and a multilingual talent pool made the city “a natural choice for us”. A well-developed legal framework that protects intellectual property and investors was also a key factor.

“Speaking from a purely business perspective, our base in Kuala Lumpur is a gateway for us to the region and will help us realise better returns on our investment and scale faster within Asean,” Karunjit explains.

“Kuala Lumpur fits in very well with our global strategy, paving the way for our rapid expansion into Asean.”

Kuala Lumpur to benefit from SRKay investment

While it is early days yet for SRKay in Kuala Lumpur, the signs are promising. Its team is growing fast, with local talent making up 90% of the workforce, says SRKay.

Most of the team members are working on advanced technology stacks — including design, cloud and artificial intelligence — and project management.

The work profile exemplifies the mutually beneficial relationship that SRKay expects to develop with Kuala Lumpur.

“Investment is just a number. Rather than mere investment, it is the impact of the investment on the lives of the people that really matters,” says Karunjit.

“So, ideally, Malaysians can benefit from the thousands of jobs, projects and e-lancing work assignments as well as e-learning opportunities created by our flagship portfolio venture, SCIKY Talent Commerce, for example,” he adds.

SRKay acknowledges that none of what has happened would have been possible without investment promotion agency InvestKL's

assistance and facilitation efforts. Karunjit summarises the group's experience with InvestKL as simply "fantastic".

"I still remember when we had all our global stakeholders from India and Europe fly to Malaysia for our first meeting with InvestKL. They really made us feel very comfortable and genuinely cared about our business," he says.

According to Karunjit, the agency also followed through on the strong first impression with clear and responsive guidance to steer SRKay through numerous investing hurdles.

It gave information on the local culture and business climate, the key government agencies to engage with, potential challenges — such as taxes — and solutions and even the right location for its office.

Karunjit stresses that as the Kuala Lumpur office was only launched in April 2019, the best days of its win-win relationship with the city are yet to come.

"With SRKay based in Kuala Lumpur, the city will reap the benefits of the employment, work and e-learning opportunities that our portfolio ventures will create over time," he says.

"And once we are more settled in the city, with a better understanding of local market dynamics as well as the startup scene, we may also start evaluating opportunities for investing in promising local start-ups," he adds.

SRKay's strategy

SRKay's underlying strategy is to play its part in growing Kuala Lumpur while expanding its own business.

Karunjit says the company seeks to leverage on Greater KL to grow and consolidate its technical expertise, product development and other functions as it scales its business in Asean.

"Further, with our large and impactful presence in India — whose consumer market is one of the largest in the world — we are also quite excited about the opportunity to help Malaysian or even regional start-ups that might be considering entering or expanding into the Indian market," he adds.

Karunjit has been based in Malaysia since 2014. He joined SRKay in 2018. He is also the co-founder of SCIKEY — a talent commerce platform that is the flagship investment of SRKay — and its head of global business operations.

"With SRKay based in Kuala Lumpur, the city will reap the benefits of the employment, work and e-learning opportunities that our portfolio ventures will create over time."

— Karunjit Kumar Dhir, SRKay spokesman

WHY GREATER KL



Kuala Lumpur's geographical advantage makes an excellent regional connectivity and airport facilities



The availability of multi-lingual talent to address the needs of regional clientele



Fantastic support provided by local government institutions like InvestKL



BENEFITS TO THE
LOCAL ECONOMY



**Rapid upskilling and
reskilling of local graduates
and workforce to boost
Malaysian employment
market**



**Leveraging the local multi-
lingual and young talent
by making more people
'Employable' and 'Job ready'
at fast pace**



**Opening window to
thousands of jobs,
projects, e-lancing work
assignments and e-learning
opportunities locally via
flagship portfolio venture
SCIKEY Talent Commerce**

Even for SCIKEY itself, the industry growth trajectory in the region is promising. The market for human resources management is expected to reach US\$40 billion in value by 2027, representing a compound annual growth rate of 11.7%, says Karunjit.

Looking ahead, he expects SCIKEY’s growth to be driven by its two main markets, namely India and Malaysia. In India, it counts some of the best local brands as clients.

“The talent industry has been waiting for a holistic and meaningful disruption. This long-overdue disruption has been further accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, during which traditional businesses and HR models have been challenged in a big way, Karunjit says.

“In the post-Covid scenario, it is not about permanent employees anymore but a workforce comprising full-time, contract and gig workers and even a partner ecosystem that helps your company grow,” he explains.

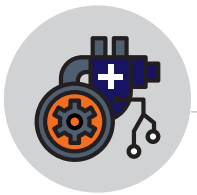
SCIKEY is preparing to launch an e-learning platform that it expects will play a big role in the rapid reskilling and upskilling of the Malaysian workforce in a post-Covid world.

“This new investment in the e-learning initiative will help us position our Kuala Lumpur set-up as a massive learning hub, giving a boost to the Malaysian economy and employment market by making people more employable and job-ready at a fast pace,” says Karunjit.

Source: The Edge

“The talent industry has been waiting for a holistic and meaningful disruption. This long-overdue disruption has been further accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, during which traditional businesses and HR models have been challenged in a big way.”

— Karunjit Kumar Dhir, SRKay spokesman



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Powering GE Forward Globally from Kuala Lumpur

Abdul Rahman Abu Haniffa, director of government affairs and policy at GE Malaysia

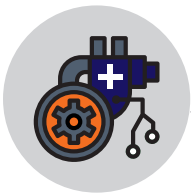
For General Electric Co (GE), Kuala Lumpur was the obvious location when it decided to set up a regional IT support team in 2018. Three years later, its decision has proved to be more than justified, as the team – one of only four in the world – is handling 30% of the workload globally.

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



TECHNOLOGY

General Electric

GENERAL ELECTRIC



US fortune
500
company



Power, renewable energy,
aviation and healthcare



45 years in Malaysia



1200
employees

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.

"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.

"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 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."

— Abdul Rahman Abu Haniffa, director of government affairs and policy at GE Malaysia

"Malaysia's broadband and power infrastructure is stable, and our cybersecurity capabilities are strong."

— Abdul Rahman Abu Haniffa, director of government affairs and policy at GE Malaysia

Tapping Malaysia's digitalisation drive

"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 a benchmark and that's good for the country's investment prospects."

As for the Kuala Lumpur 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.

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 skillsets. 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."

Source: The Edge

WHY GREATER KL



Strong infrastructure & multilingual talent pool



Stability and high potential market



Good taxation regime

BENEFITS TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY



Supporting Industry 4.0 and digitalisation drive in the country



Technology transfer to local talent



GE hub in Kuala Lumpur provides expert IT support globally



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Global Innovative Medical Firms Pick Greater KL as Regional Hub

Global medical technology and pharmaceutical firms are turning to Malaysia as their investment destination, as they chart their mid-to-long term growth strategy across the region.

For biopharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, the focus going forward will be on achieving growth through a science-led innovation strategy, its country president and managing director Dr Sanjeev Panchal said.

In March, it was reported that AstraZeneca will invest more than RM500 million in Malaysia over the next five years for a new headquarters and to roll out new robotic and cognitive technology.

With more than RM500 million in investment across 2019 to 2023 in strategic segments of its business operations, including medical, finance, clinical studies and commercial, the company will bring innovation by expanding its footprint in Malaysia, said Sanjeev.

“Beyond accelerating our innovation pipeline to patients in Malaysia, AstraZeneca is working with healthcare stakeholders to address gaps in disease management through ‘beyond the pill’ ecosystem a patient-centric approach.



LEFT: Madeleine Roach, Asia Pacific global finance services head, AstraZeneca

RIGHT: Erik Ramp, Edwards Life Sciences, Japan, Asia and Pacific strategy and business operations director



AstraZeneca & Edwards Lifesciences

“These includes strong portfolios of medical educations, diagnostics, research, diseases prevent activities and various programmes to increase affordability and access to innovative medicines, designed to achieve better healthcare outcomes for patients in Malaysia.”

Meanwhile, global medical technology company Edwards Lifesciences (Edwards) is focusing on creating more awareness of the services it provides, said Japan, Asia and Pacific strategy and business operations director Erik Ramp.

“In Malaysia, there's growing awareness of structural heart disease, which is what we treat. We work closely with Institut Jantung Negara and they are seeing more people coming in and asking about the devices and therapies that we provide. It's a positive sign as it means that patients are becoming more aware of the treatments that are available.

“The diseases that we treat are not just exclusively to Malaysia. They can happen to anyone anywhere in the world. Worldwide, treatment rates for

heart valve disease are traditionally very low, so it's good that people are becoming more aware and speaking to their doctors.”

Back in April, it was reported that Edwards will be investing RM100 million in Malaysia over the next five years through its new regional business service centre, which is located at KL Eco City.

“We set up the office here in April 2019 and have grown our headcount from zero employees to 37. We've been able to establish a finance, IT and marketing departments to support our operations in Japan, Asia and Pacific,” said Ramp.

“We expect a lot of our growth next year and the coming years, especially from our businesses in Japan and China. They are two of our biggest growth countries and as that grows, so will our support services here.”

He added that the RM100 million investment will comprise mostly payroll, training and development, travel budgets and capital expenditure.



MEDICAL SERVICES

AstraZeneca & Edwards Lifesciences

"Given the country's ease in doing business, its transparency, efficiency and being investor-friendly, Malaysia is well positioned to become an innovation hub for MNCs looking to grow their business within Asean."

— Muhammad Azmi Zulkifli, CEO of InvestKL

AstraZeneca Asia Pacific global finance services head Madeleine Roach said the group conducted an in-depth study before deciding on a location to set its regional hub.

"We always do a thorough study of the sites that we pick and where we want to establish. Because of the investment requirements, it needs to become a hub where we can find really good talent.

"We invest a lot in upskilling and developing our people because we want to see our people advance in their careers," she said.

Roach said AstraZeneca will also be rolling out an academy to boost its employee skills.

"The academy will focus on core skills from understanding our systems to our brands in the company, to looking into some technical areas like tax, investor relations and areas that they may not necessarily be exposed to.

"The academy will go live in October," she said.

Separately, Edwards' Ramp said one of the challenges of setting up base in Malaysia is that not many people are aware of the services that the company offers.

"We are dedicated to very focused areas of medical technology. We treat structural heart disease, which is a subset of cardiovascular disease and when everyone thinks cardiovascular disease, they think heart attack. We also have technologies that help in the monitoring and treatment of those with critical illness.

More people become aware of Edwards when they or someone they know is affected by heart valve disease or a critical illness, so it is not necessarily a company that the general public

knows – which can present challenges for recruiting.

"We need to spend time telling our story and what we do, that the diseases we treat may be a small part of cardiovascular disease but it's also deadly if it goes untreated. Our employees have a great opportunity to make an impact on people's lives here in Malaysia and all around the world."

Tying up with InvestKL has helped Edwards to create that much needed awareness, said Ramp.

"InvestKL has helped us in terms of the talent market here, as well as helping us connect with other multinational companies (MNCs)," he said.

For AstraZeneca, InvestKL has been invaluable in helping it explore new opportunities and possibilities, said Sanjeev.

"InvestKL has facilitated multiple engagements with government agencies, as well as other MNC's, hence strengthening our company positioning as one of the preferred healthcare MNC committed firm to support Greater KL's proposition as a regional business hub."

"Apart from that, with this collaboration, InvestKL has assisted and supported the company to increase our visibility among the stakeholders and directing us to the preferred stakeholders to achieve our target as the biggest healthcare MNC in Malaysia," he said.

InvestKL acting chief executive officer Muhammad Azmi Zulkifli meanwhile is optimistic about the prospects of attracting more MNCs like AstraZeneca and Edwards into the country, moving forward.

Source: The Star



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Nathan
Vaidyanathan,
Alcon head of Asia
Pacific

Kuala Lumpur Continues to Draw Investments in Global Business Services, as Seen in Alcon's Decision to Set Up Hub

In 2019, Alcon Laboratories decided to locate its GBS hub for Asia-Pacific in Kuala Lumpur as the city has a lot to offer multinational corporations (MNCs), including a large pool of multilingual talent, especially in the financial services sector.

The setting up of Alcon Global Services (AGS), a regional business services hub for Alcon Laboratories, shows that Kuala Lumpur continues to attract investments in the global business services (GBS) sector.

In 2019, Alcon Laboratories decided to locate its GBS hub for Asia-Pacific in Kuala Lumpur

as the city has a lot to offer multinational corporations (MNCs), including a large pool of multilingual talent, especially in the financial services sector.

"One of the key considerations when deciding to set up a regional hub in Asia was the language capability to support Asia-Pacific countries. With its diverse cultural



MEDICAL SERVICES

Alcon

"One of the key considerations when deciding to set up a regional hub in Asia was the language capability to support Asia-Pacific countries. With its diverse cultural background, Malaysia offers the best talent in the region with language capabilities such as Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean and Bahasa Indonesia, to name a few. Malaysia also fared better in terms of talent pool availability, especially for finance functions."

— Nathan Vaidyanathan, Alcon head of Asia Pacific

ALCON SERVICES



A Swiss-base MNC founded in 1945, specialising in ophthalmology, vision care products and ophthalmic surgical technologies and devices



**Presence in
75
countries with products
sold worldwide**

background, Malaysia offers the best talent in the region with language capabilities such as Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean and Bahasa Indonesia, to name a few. Malaysia also fared better in terms of talent pool availability, especially for finance functions," says Alcon head of Asia Pacific Nathan Vaidyanathan.

Alcon is an MNC based in Geneva, Switzerland, that specialises in ophthalmology, producing vision care products such as contact lenses, lens care products and ophthalmic surgical products. Its vision care portfolio ranges from disposable contact lenses to reusable colour-enhancing contact lenses, while its comprehensive portfolio of ocular health products includes products for dry eyes, contact lens care and ocular allergies.

The Alcon product line has expanded from pharmaceuticals to surgical products. Today, the company has operations in 75

countries and its products are sold in more than 180 countries.

"The Alcon regional hub in Kuala Lumpur has been created to embrace change and evolve to the next level," says Nathan. The hub concentrates on business support (with language expertise) across various functions, including finance, HR, procurement, supply chain, enterprise resource planning, IT and quality assurance.

Alcon invests significantly on operational costs for the AGS Kuala Lumpur regional hub. This includes hiring the best talent in the market as well as facility costs. The hub also supports small and medium enterprises and local businesses in the Greater KL area, especially when it comes to collaborative efforts at events and other engagements. AGS' vision is to expand the Kuala Lumpur centre with multiple functions and areas of expertise, says Nathan.

The decision to set up AGS was made easier with the assistance provided by InvestKL in areas such as hiring, Malaysian entry and visa applications for non-Malaysians as well accessibility to the Human Resources Development Fund.

"InvestKL keeps us updated on government regulations applicable to MNCs. This helps us to stay on top of the latest policies that impact our hiring needs and plan accordingly," says Nathan.

AGS has been providing high-quality finance and accounting services to the company’s offices in the region, says Alcon’s head of global FRA (financial reporting and accounting) operations Brian King. "We are currently adding more finance and accounting roles into AGS based on our confidence in the availability

of strong talent in the market with finance and accounting skills, digital competencies and language capabilities. AGS has developed a strong culture around Alcon’s values and behaviours, as well as key initiatives to instil a mindset around continuous improvement, customer service and talent development."

Meanwhile, Alcon’s head of AGS Lars Christophers says AGS is an integral part of Alcon’s multi-year transformation journey. "The AGS teams around the world are partnering with Alcon’s functions and businesses in order to deliver better outcomes for our customers, first and foremost of which is to make our patients see brilliantly."

Source: The Edge

"The Alcon regional hub in Kuala Lumpur has been created to embrace change and evolve to the next level. The hub concentrates on language support across various functions, including finance, procurement, supply chain,enterprise resource planning, IT and quality assurance."

— Nathan Vaidyanathan, Alcon head of Asia Pacific

WHY GREATER KL



Availability of specialised talent pool in financial services sector



Diverse cultural background that enables regional language capability to support APAC countries



Strong digital competencies

BENEFITS TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY



Creation of high-value, professional job opportunities in finance and business services



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Patrik Grande,
Novartis country
president

Novartis Big on Talent Growth

Novartis Corp (M) Sdn Bhd, a leading a healthcare company with expertise in science and innovation, sees talent development as an integral part in strengthening its brand and being a global player.

As an organisation with a purpose to improve and extend people’s lives, Novartis country president, Patrik Grande said talent building is very important in the organisation.

"By placing an importance in learning and having the curiosity to discover and create, our associates will learn through experiments and eventually accomplish and build new competencies and progress in their career," he told StarBiz.

Grande said Novartis complemented this with structured development programs through a series of blended and experiential learning, as

well as cross-border assignments to prepare its talents for future roles.

Grande noted that even before the start of the pandemic, Novartis had been keeping up with the world of digital and technological transformation.

InvestKL, a government investment promotion agency under MITI Malaysia, facilitated Novartis in its expansion to host its Global Shared Services hub for APAC in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2015.

Novartis is a testament of a multinational company’s strong commitment to talent

growth, which provides high value job opportunities, knowledge and skills transfers expertise to Malaysia's dynamic young talent.

"Since 2018, we have launched many digital learning platform to provide our associates with access to learning such as Digital Awareness Hub in 2018 to demystify digital technology and provide free access to online courses by Coursera, LinkedIn Learning and UP4Growth in 2019."

"The pandemic has put us through a steep learning curve in finding new ways of working and having the agility to build new competencies."

InvestKL CEO Muhammad Azmi Zulkifli stated: "Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia's ecosystem continues to cater to high impact, high value and high tech MNCs with a pro business administration who is ready to open doors for business and readily serves the needs of potential MNC investors despite the pandemic."

Currently, Novartis has over 700 associates in Malaysia under different divisions - Novartis Pharmaceuticals, Oncology, Sandoz and

Novartis Shared Services. Over 500 of its associates work under Novartis Global Service Centre Kuala Lumpur where, they support operations for more than 20 countries.

"Malaysia offers a conducive business environment like advance infrastructure and digital connectivity, quality of living conditions and impressive multilingual and culturally diverse talent pool," said Grande.

"Furthermore, its strategic location provides us with seamless connectivity to our other offices across the emerging South-East Asia region. Another factor is Malaysia identifies healthcare as one of the key areas to generate economic growth and continues to invest in advancing healthcare infrastructure, improve access to innovative medicines and promote healthcare tourism."

Grande added that Novartis chose Kuala Lumpur as its regional headquarters due to its reputation as a major regional hub with many diversified industries.

"As we continue to reimagine medicines, we understand the power of data and emerging digital technologies, as well as its importance

"Furthermore, its strategic location provides us with seamless connectivity to our other offices across the emerging South-East Asia region. Another factor is Malaysia identifies healthcare as one of the key areas to generate economic growth and continues to invest in advancing healthcare infrastructure, improve access to innovative medicines and promote healthcare tourism."

— Patrik Grande, Novartis country president



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Novartis

in reshaping the healthcare landscape in the future. Hence, as we evolve with the digital revolution, having our hub in a city like Kuala Lumpur that is pivoting towards next-generation digital industries was in line with our growth plans.

"Additionally, having a hub here provided us with attractive and multiple tax incentives that allowed us to reinvest our capital into the people that matters most, namely, our associates."

Going forward, Grande said Novartis will continue its commitment in developing talents, by providing opportunities to local talents to grow in their career by working in the company.

"With 15 different nationalities working among us, we are proud of our culture of diversity and inclusion. We welcome talents that are inspired to serve better lives for Malaysians."

Azmi concludes, "We are very pleased of Kuala Lumpur's long-standing history of attracting high value, high impact MNCs such as Novartis to set up regional services hub here, notwithstanding with InvestKL's recent achievement of crossing the 100 MNCs milestone. I am confident Kuala Lumpur's diverse multilingual talent, strategic location, IR4.0 driven economy and solid infrastructure will continue to attract more investors."

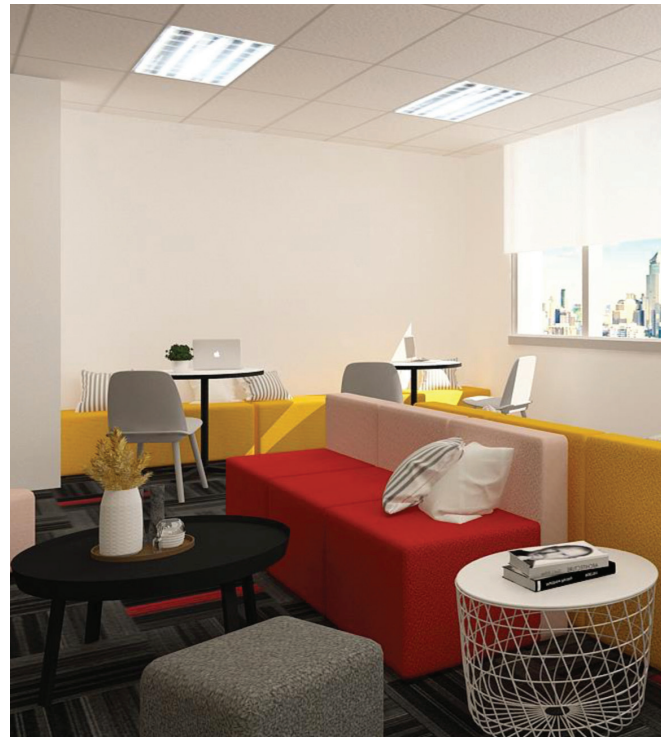
Source: The Star

"With 15 different nationalities working among us, we are proud of our culture of diversity and inclusion. We welcome talents that are inspired to serve better lives for Malaysians."

— Patrik Grande, Novartis country president



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Greater KL Attracts Multinationals to Expand Their Regional Activities

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.

Despite the global pandemic, multinational companies (MNC) such as International SOS (M) Sdn Bhd and Huntsman 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



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International SOS & Huntsman

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 specialty chemicals company, is looking to grow its global and regional Asia-Pacific (APAC) global business services (GBS) hub, 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 Huntsman businesses across the globe.

Developing cutting-edge technologies in Kuala Lumpur

Before the outbreak of the coronavirus in early 2020, 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 Kuala Lumpur, and they are able to decide 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 Kuala Lumpur 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.



LEFT: David Ng, managing director of International SOS Malaysia and Myanmar



RIGHT: Sunil Rajamony, GBS Global and Regional Hub Leader and Director of Accounting Shared Services APAC, Huntsman

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 business outcomes. 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."



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A supportive base for higher-value services

While there are other Huntsman shared services sites around the world, Sunil says, the decision was made to leverage and build on the existing capabilities of the local operations in Kuala Lumpur.

“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. Kuala Lumpur 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 has 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.

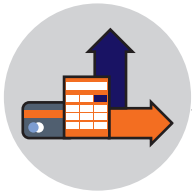
Huntsman’s local GBS centre will soon move to a bigger modern office that is designed to be open, integrated, creative and inspiring. “The new and upgraded current office has a modern design with elements such as huddle rooms that are aimed to get small groups to collaborate on innovative ideas. We hope 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.

Source: The Edge

“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.”

— David Ng, managing director of International SOS Malaysia and Myanmar



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Allianz Sows Seeds in Greater KL, Malaysia to Reap Regional Harvest

Zakri Khir, Allianz Malaysia Bhd CEO and Joseph Gross, Allianz Life Insurance Malaysia Bhd CEO

For a nation blessed with natural resources galore, there is only one resource in particular in Malaysia that caught the eye of multinational financial services company Allianz.

And that coveted resource is people, says Allianz Malaysia Bhd CEO Zakri Khir — specifically, highly skilled and highly trained actuaries. It is why the German multinational, the world's largest insurance company, decided to invest in a Center of Competence (COC) right in the heart of Malaysia's capital city, Kuala Lumpur.

"Malaysia has a great talent supply for actuaries. We have a lot of good higher learning institutions that are producing

quality actuaries here, and they are so in demand globally."

"But because there are not enough opportunities for all these talent domestically, we see young Malaysians leaving to seek opportunities elsewhere and that is why today we see Malaysian-trained actuaries in high-ranking positions across the globe," says Zakri.

With an initial investment of RM3.5 million between January and September 2019, the



ALLIANZ

**RM3.5
million**

**of initial investment in the
approximate expenditure
of RM5 million annually
to operate**



**Delivers highly technical
support functions to 7
countries in Asia Pacific**



**Asia is the biggest growth
segment globally**



**The COC is the engine in the
larger regional growth drive
and first of its kind in Asia**

COC today counts a workforce of 23, out of which 19 are Malaysians.

They support the insurance behemoth's number-crunching needs across seven countries in Asia.

Though the headcount may appear small, the value of tapping the burgeoning talent pool for Allianz cannot be overstated in the context of its exposure to the region, says Zakri.

To date, Allianz's exposure to the region is still relatively small compared with other markets. However, that low base means Asia is its biggest growth segment globally, Zakri adds.

The Allianz Group closed another successful quarter with a strong business performance. The group reported strong operating profit of €3.0 billion in 3Q2019.

Internal revenue growth, which adjusts for currency and consolidation effects, was 6.4% with positive contributions from all business segments, in particular the Life/Health business segment. Total revenues increased 8.1% CIOY of opportunity to €33.4 billion (third quarter of 2018: €30.9 billion).

Operating profit was strong at €3.0 billion. "So from that perspective, the COC in Kuala Lumpur could be considered the engine in the larger regional growth drive," says Zakri.

The team, split into seven work streams, undertakes high-value and high-skilled work on a daily basis, which includes underwriting, actuarial analysis, compliance and risk management and claims.

That said, Malaysia is not the only country in the region with a respected conveyor belt of well-trained actuaries.

Joseph Gross, CEO of Allianz Life Insurance Malaysia Bhd, acknowledges that the consideration process had reviewed multiple candidate countries.

Even then, the decision was not easy — the COC was to be the first of its kind in Asia for Allianz. And the consolidation in Kuala Lumpur of the actuarial brainpower, so to speak, away from the head office in Singapore was "counter-intuitive" and took some convincing before it was greenlit, Gross recalls.

"We had three key criteria that we placed the highest importance on and Kuala Lumpur fit the bill

Operating profit was strong at €3.0 billion. "So from that perspective, the COC in Kuala Lumpur could be considered the engine in the larger regional growth drive."

— Zakri Khir, Allianz Malaysia Bhd CEO

“We had three key criteria that we placed the highest importance on and Kuala Lumpur fit the bill perfectly. First was competency in the skillset we needed; second, value for money; and third was multi-lingual capabilities to support our operations across Asia-Pacific.”

— Joseph Gross, CEO of Allianz Life Insurance Malaysia Bhd

perfectly. First was competency in the skillset we needed; second, value for money; and third was multi-lingual capabilities to support our operations across Asia-Pacific,” says Gross.

Given instant connectivity in this day and age of rapidly advancing technology, the fact that Kuala Lumpur is geographically smack in the heart of Asia-Pacific and within just hours of flying to most of the continent was not critical but a pleasant bonus too, Gross adds.

However, it was not plain sailing to set up the COC even after the decision was made. One of the key challenges from Allianz’s perspective was to convince the local financial services regulator, Bank Negara Malaysia, that the idea benefits the country as much as Allianz.

That was where InvestKL came in and played a pivotal role, Gross reminisces. The agency

facilitated communications and discussions between the two parties and smoothed over the transpicuousness. In fact, the presence of InvestKL as a facilitative body to aid multinational investors looking to come in also lent weight to the choice of Malaysia over other competing nations in the region, Zakri acknowledges.

An agency under the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, InvestKL is tasked to attract 100 multinational companies (MNCs) to invest in a regional hub in Kuala Lumpur by 2020. Allianz is part of 78 MNCs that it had wooed over between 2011 and 2018.

In the end, both InvestKL and Allianz successfully convinced the regulator and the rest is history. In addition, InvestKL also aided Allianz in navigating other forms of red tape and in procuring much-needed incentives to get the COC off the ground.

WHY GREATER KL



Geographically located in the heart of Asia Pacific & close proximity to most of the continents



Great talent supply for highly trained actuaries



Competency in high value skillset, value for money and multilingual capabilities to support operations across Asia Pacific



BENEFITS TO THE
LOCAL ECONOMY



Transfer of high value
skills, knowledge & best
practices to local talent in a
multinational work setting



Investing in the
development of talent
and human capital



80%
of the workforce are
Malaysian & growing

“We are still working out how to measure the value of the support from the COC to the regional operations, but what is clear to us is that the COC has given Allianz value for money from a big-picture perspective.”

— Zakri Khir, Allianz Malaysia Bhd CEO

In hindsight, it was not difficult to see how the COC would be good for Kuala Lumpur. Among others, its establishment means the transfer of high-value skills, knowledge and best practices to local talent in a multinational work setting — a rare combination that is difficult to obtain elsewhere.

That in itself also became a slight problem in the early days, Gross points out. As the COC trained a specialist, other competitors came knocking and, as a result, the COC initially had a relatively high churn rate, he says, adding that things have stabilised in more recent times.

At present, the COC costs approximately RM5 million to operate on an annual basis. In return, however, it delivers a highly technical supporting function to seven markets in Asia-Pacific worth many times more, Zakri says.

“We are still working out how to measure the value of the support from the COC to the regional operations, but what is clear to us is that the COC has given Allianz value for money from a big-picture perspective,” says Zakri.

“That is why we are still planning for further investments in the COC, which will mostly go towards developing the talent and human capital,” Zakri adds.

While plans are fluid, Allianz is firm on growing the COC’s headcount to north of 50 in the coming years, he adds, especially as companies across the region prepare for the looming implementation of IFRS17, the international financial reporting standard set to kick in in 2022.

Source: The Edge



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