



(From left): Yeow, KLK OLEO deputy CEO Siew Fook Ming, Lokman and Mak.



A night to remember: Award winners with (back row, from left, without trophies) Mohd Mustafa, Yeow, Chor, Lokman, Chia, Mak and Kuan at the Export Excellence Awards 2022 Gala Nights at M Resorts and Hotel in Kuala Lumpur. Also present is Esther Ng (second row, second from left).



(From left): Mohd Mustafa, Yeow, Chor, Nata Food Manufacturing managing director Loh Kin Hoo, Lokman, Chia, Mak and Kuan.

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THE third edition of Export Excellence Awards (EEA) turned the spotlight on deserving Malaysian exporters that have not only exhibited great resilience throughout these uncertain economic times that brought about extensive supply chain disruptions, but also grew their respective businesses while emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The EEA 2022 Gala Night, held at M Resort and Hotel, recognised the excellence of exporters across different spheres, sectors and geographical regions, with over 30 awards handed out.

The guest of honour on the night was International Trade and Industry Ministry (Miti) secretary-general Datuk Seri Lokman Hakim Ali, who said the EEA plays a definitive role in enhancing industry excellence by recognising and showcasing the calibre of Malaysia's key economic drivers.

Lokman added that the export trade industry has shown good resilience, as well as good growth.

"Our export trade industry has grown by leaps and bounds. Even through the aftermath of a pandemic, it remained resilient and continues to grow exponentially," Lokman said in a keynote address at the EEA 2022 Gala Night.

He believes the export trade industry is the key to transitioning Malaysia into a high-income economy.

"While these exemplary industry players are able to harness technological mastery, develop capital and human resources, and bring about a shift in economic structure, there are still ways to go," he said.

With that, he noted there must be an emphasis on achieving the global environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards, in the headway of strengthening the local economy while navigating through the global economic headwinds.

"From a trade perspective, we are witnessing more and more export destinations adopting sustainability practices, with a specific emphasis on ESG compliance.

"Our exporters need to understand and appreciate this global expectation and start looking at global standards to benchmark and regulate their operations," he said.

"To this end, Malaysia External Trade Development Corp (Matrade) has been actively encouraging exporters to embrace sustainability policies and practices through the Sustainability Action Values for Exporters (Save) initiative," he added.

Save, which was launched as a corporate shared values (CSV) programme by Matrade in Oct 2019, is aimed at encouraging sustainable practices based on the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals among Malaysian companies in the export business.

"This is part of our efforts to future-proof Malaysian exporters and to ensure the companies remain relevant, attractive, and competitive in the global arena.

"Beyond that, this also transforms our business ecosystem into one that is more vibrant, resilient and equitable," he said.

"More importantly, collective and collaborative efforts in adopting ESG practices will make a real difference in moving the needle in the nation's sustainability agenda," he added.

Meanwhile, Star Media Group Bhd chief executive officer Alex Yeow said that aside from recognising outstanding exporters, a

Perseverance pays off for resilient exporters

Industry leaders recognised at annual gala



series of roadshows were organised to equip participants with the latest trends in the ever-changing business landscape.

Additionally, he said, new heights were reached this year and as a result, two new categories, the Woman Exporter of the Year award and the Rising Star award, were introduced.

"Not forgetting that even though we are already in the post-pandemic era, we maintained the Thriving in Adversity Award, as 2022 was still a challenging year for many businesses," he said.

Yeow noted that Malaysia's third quarter (3Q) gross domestic product (GDP) performance came in strong, with exports helping to power growth.

"Exports grew robustly by 23.9% year-on-year (y-o-y) in 3Q, which is higher than the 10.4% in 2Q," he said.

Diversified exports

"This, if anything, is a testament to how Covid-19 has pushed you to think beyond Malaysia's borders, with exports diversified and widespread across the various markets," Yeow added.

Echoing Yeow, Lokman noted that Malaysia's GDP for the 3Q had beaten market consensus of 11.7% y-o-y and our expectation of 12.2% y-o-y.

"It has in fact expanded by 14.2% y-o-y," Lokman said, speaking of the country's third quarter of 2022 (3Q22) GDP performance.

Lokman added that it is the strongest quarterly GDP performance reported since 2Q21, where the economy grew by 15.9% y-o-y.

According to Lokman, the main drivers for exports were electrical and electronics (E&E) products, machinery equipment and parts, and petroleum products which expanded 41.5%, 42.7% and 114.6% y-o-y, respectively, for 3Q22.

Meanwhile, Yeow noted that the quality of submissions this year showcases how Malaysian exporters are doing well to constantly adapt in embracing digitalisation and embedding sustainability across their business.

Yeow believes that all of these will allow them to remain competitive as part of the global supply chain.

During the EEA 2022 Gala Night, 34 awards were given out to deserving exporters for excellence across different sectors and geographical regions.

These sectors include agriculture, food and beverage; consumer products; industrial products; machinery, electrical and electronics; as well as services.

Based on annual sales turnover, the winners were also separated into the two tiers, namely small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as well as mid-tier and large companies.

SMEs are categorised into those with up to RM50mil in annual sales turnover for products and up to RM20mil for services, while mid-tier and large companies are those with above RM50mil in annual sales turnover for products and above RM20mil for services.

Moreover, five special awards were also given out, including the Exporter of the Year award, for both tiers.

World's largest manufacturer

Emerging as the Exporter of the Year among the SMEs was durian exporter Duricious Sdn Bhd, while glove manufacturer Top Glove Corp Bhd was top among the larger companies.

Aside from winning Exporter of the Year for the mid-tier and large companies, the world's largest rubber glove manufacturer Top Glove also won the Gold Award for the Consumer Products category under the same tier.

Top Glove executive director and chief operating officer Ng Yong Lin said the company has been blessed with certain external factors over the past years that drove its earnings up.

"For now, we have benefitted during the Covid period. So, we will continue to invest back in people, technology and innovations, to keep the growth momentum," Ng told *StarTV*.

Duricious, on the other hand, won the Gold Award for the Agriculture, Food and Beverage category among the SMEs.

Speaking with *StarTV* after receiving the awards, Simon Chin, who is the co-founder and managing director of Duricious, said the company is hoping to be the top durian brand in Malaysia.

Duricious, which sells durian under the brand called D'King, currently exports durian to about 13 countries around the world.

Moving forward, the company looks to expand its customer base and tap into other countries, serving durian for all.

Simon said Duricious is made up of a very young team that constantly thinks about

innovation and creativity.

"We turned a very boring product like durian, into a very fascinating product," Simon said.

"Being an SME, cashflow was a challenge to Duricious due to the high durian value. However, the group overcame the challenges with fund aids from banks.

"With this award, the confidence level of our consumers and customers for our products is lifted," Simon said.

Additionally, for this year, two new categories were introduced which were the Woman Exporter of the Year award, clinched by Maxvue Vision Sdn Bhd, and the Rising Star award, nabbed by Nata Food Manufacturing Sdn Bhd.

Maxvue Vision manufactures and distributes contact lenses, while Nata Food Manufacturing manufactures nata de coco, translucent jelly-like food produced from the fermentation of coconut water.

A special award for halal products was presented to Top Fruits Sdn Bhd, which has been involved in the agricultural business since 1986, while Kuala Lumpur Kepong Bhd (KLK) was conferred the Thriving in Adversity award.

KLK's core business activity is plantations, including oil palm and rubber.

The event was also attended by SMG chairman Tan Sri Chor Chee Heung, Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia chairman Datuk Yvonne Chia, Matrade CEO Datuk Mohd Mustafa Abdul Aziz, Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia CEO Mak Joon Nien, Standard Chartered Saadiq CEO Mohd Suhaimi Abd Hamid, PKT Logistics chief marketing officer Kuan Eu Jin, SMG chief business officer Lydia Wang, SMG chief content officer Esther Ng, as well as other heads of companies and corporate guests.

Local businesses

Held for the first time in 2019, EEA was created to celebrate "the best of the best" in the export world and honour the achievements of local businesses in the export sector.

Beyond winning trophies, the awards programme aims to build a community of Malaysian exporters to support one another, share thought leadership and best practices with the industry's elite, and to provide a platform for exporters to showcase their capabilities and global potential.

Carlsberg was the official beer sponsor for the EEA 2022 Gala Night.

EEA is organised by Star Media Group in partnership with Standard Chartered Malaysia, and PKT Logistics Group as co-sponsor and Matrade the patron. It is audited by BDO.

For more information on EEA, visit exportawards.com.my or email eea@thestar.com.my