

19/08/1998

Asian vending association proposed

ENTREPRENEUR Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamad yesterday called for the establishment of an Asian Vending Association to further strengthen the industry in the region.

"This is a fast growing industry and the potential is very great as the number of machine per population is still small (in the region).

"So Malaysians (and the association) should take the lead not only to manufacture but also to export such machines."

Mustapa was speaking to reporters after officiating Vending Asia 1998, an international vending exhibition organised by ExpoAge International (M) Sdn Bhd and endorsed by the Ministry.

He added that the Asian vending market is estimated at almost US\$11.6 billion (RM48.72 billion).

Mustapa said there were about 8,000 vending machines in Malaysia. Of the total, 6,000 units were owned by international bottler of soft drinks products, F&N Coca-Cola Pte Ltd.

Automated merchandising is defined as "providing service at an unattended point of sale through the use of monetarily-driven equipment". It is about setting up a business in several locations simultaneously to maximise returns.

Practically, anything can be vended, provided it can be suitably packaged. These include hot and cold drinks, food, aspirins, baby products, condoms, feminine hygiene products and many others.

"Vending machines save on shop space rental and is also a clean alternative to over-the-counter service," said Mustapa.

ExpoAge International (M) chairman Mirzan Mahathir said automated merchandising or vending allows for the delivery of goods and services when it is not cost effective to offer normal counter services.

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