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MEC goes for 'green' products

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THE deal struck by Malaysia Electric Corporation Bhd with luxury store Harrods owner Mohamad Al Fayed to market the MEC range of home electrical appliances at 25 Harrods outlets worldwide, including the one to be opened at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang, has indeed given the National Electrical Appliances project a great boost.

Trial orders though they may seem, the Egyptian-born tycoon, who is the chairman of Harrods Limited of Knightbridge, has already indicated that Harrods would like MEC to manufacture the products under its house brand.

Four consignments of MEC appliances including rice cookers, refrigerators, toasters, irons, television sets, air-conditioners, water heaters, blenders and coffee-making machines, had since been shipped to Harrods famed London store.

An elated Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who visited the store on Wednesday remarked:

"I am proud that Malaysian products will be displayed and sold at this most prestigious department store in the world."

MEC Bhd began operations in the early 1970s as Superior Products Incorporated.

It was the first wholly-owned Malaysian manufacturer of household electrical appliances which also served as a reputable Original Equipment Manufacturer for many international brands.

MEC today manufactures electrical products that can compete with reputable brands.

Committed to playing a catalytic role, the company spurs the development of ancillary industries by creating demand for locally-produced raw materials, parts and components.

MEC Bhd hopes to achieve the 100 per cent mark in local content over the medium-term.

"Even after this target is achieved, MEC will not give up its role as an anchor company to local small and medium scale industries which are participating in the vendor development programme initiated by the Entrepreneur Development Ministry," said MEC Bhd president and chief executive officer Tan Sri Teong Teck Leng.

As the programme is centred in the MEC City in Gambang, 25km from Kuantan, Teong expressed optimism that it will spur economic growth in the Eastern Corridor of Peninsula Malaysia.

MEC City, a sophisticated one-stop international trade centre for locally-made electrical appliances, is a national project jointly developed by the Pahang State Government (10 per cent), Kuala Lumpur Industries Holdings Bhd (60 per cent) and Government-owned Khazanah Nasional Bhd (30 per cent).

The first of its five phases was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in March last year.

Come the year 2000, MEC Bhd targets to chalk up its total production to RM1 billion.

To date, it has invested RM300 million in technology and machinery for its air-conditioner, refrigerator, compressor, washing machine, colour television, fan, fan motor and plastic injection moulding operations.

"MEC depends on automation and computerisation to ensure its ability to achieve high levels of quality, efficiency and productivity.

"These have bearing on performance in the international arena while

reducing dependence on labour in certain processes," said Teong.

In its sprawling factories spanning 25.1ha and built at a cost of RM115 million, a sophisticated array of machinery and computerised testing equipment have been set up to ensure that all MEC products meet stringent quality standard.

For example, automation has been applied in metal fabrication, painting and assembly to ensure speed and precision, thus minimising variation and error.

MEC's latest product, the omelette maker will be locally manufactured at MEC City with the production capacity forecast at about three million units per year.

Since its launch in Australia in November, about 80,000 units of the product has been exported.

"Customers can have every confidence in all MEC products which are environmental-friendly.

"MEC's manufacturing processes are designed to reduce contamination and pollution. Waste water in our paint shops are recycled and CFC-free refrigerant is used for all our refrigerators," stressed Teong.

MEC products are certified by Sirim. In October last year, MEC Audio-Visual Sdn Bhd was awarded ISO 9002 certification.

MEC Puteri Rice cooker has been accredited as the first Made-in-Malaysia computerised cooker by the Malaysia Book of Records.

Its primary goal now is towards achieving the ISO 9001 certification which comprehensively covers the total package for manufacturing including product design and R&D.

Currently, MEC has appointed 700 electrical and air conditioner dealers nationwide. The target is to have a total of 1,000 dealers in Malaysia by April this year.

MEC's foreign markets include Australia, New Zealand, Cambodia, Myanmar, Hong Kong, South Africa, Brazil, Venezuela, Chile, the Netherlands, Belgium, Cyprus, Bosnia and the Middle East, and it recently signed dealership agreements with companies in Yemen and Mongolia.

Its service centres are now available in Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia, United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong and Australia.

For now, the company hopes to manufacture washing machines, before moving to microwave ovens as well as IT, telecommunications, healthcare and office automation products.

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