

Royal Mint refines ops to be international player

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By HONG BOON HOW

BEING the only mint operator in the country producing the nation's supply of circulation coins, the Royal Mint of Malaysia Sdn Bhd knows it has a huge responsibility.

Its managing director Datuk Megat Abdul Wahab Abu Bakar said that although Royal Mint was the only supplier to the government, the company still needed to improve its production efficiency to enable it to be an international player in the coin minting business.

"We plan to be a regional player in the next three years before we venture into the global coin minting business," he said.

Wahab said Royal Mint would begin minting circulation coins for several Asean governments by the end of the year.

"We have visited several regional mints in which their officials have indicated that the efficiency level of their operations was much lower than ours," he said.

Wahab also said several foreign mints had also indicated that they were unable to cope with their domestic demand for new circulation coins.

The Shah Alam operation was set up by the government in 1971 and its pioneer staff were sent for training at Britain's Royal Mint and Germany's Hamburg Mint.

Bank Negara awarded its mint operations to Mariwasa Kraftangan Sdn Bhd under a privatisation programme last year.

Royal Mint was set up by the Mariwasa group to streamline and ensure efficient management of the Shah Alam mint.

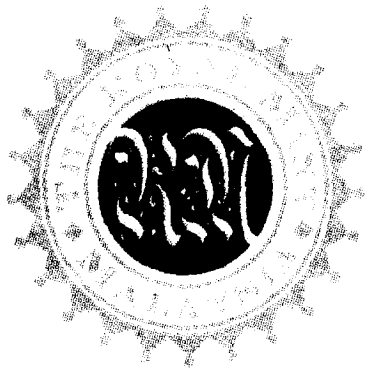
Since taking over operations of the Shah Alam mint in July last year, Royal Mint has managed to improve its efficiency and productivity.

For the 12 months ended June 30 this year, Royal Mint has produced 821.56 million circulation coins, of which 224.96 million pieces were 1 sen coins, 97.46 million were 5 sen coins, 241.14 million 10 sen coins, 219.88 million 20 sen and 38.122

million 50 sen coins.

The mint has 14 minting machines which could produce up to 5.5 million coins of various denominations per day.

In addition to minting circulation and commemorative coins, Wahab also said there were plans for Royal Mint to venture into the



production of blank coins.

Blank coins are coins which have not been stamped with their face value.

He said blank coins were currently imported from overseas and that the country could save on foreign exchange if blank coins could be produced locally.

At present, Royal Mint and other mints in the Asean region import their blank coins from Finland, South Korea, South Africa, Germany and Mexico.

"We are also exploring the possibility of barter trade with Asean governments in exchange for minting their coins or supplying the blank coins," he said.

Royal Mint manager Ahmad Tarmizi Adam said the 1 sen coin had a steel core and plated with copper, while the other denominations were made from copper and nickel alloy.

The minting machines would apply a pressure of between 100 tonnes and 150 tonnes on the blank coins to stamp the face value.

Tarmizi said once a master die had been produced, it would be used to make several working dies.

The working dies are the ones which would be installed in the minting machines to stamp the face value on the blank coins.

"Once a working die has been produced, it would undergo a special process to harden its stamping surface," he said,

"A working die can be used to make between 500,000 and 1 million coin impressions depending on the denominations before it wears out," he said.

He said coins which had been minted would be counted and packed automatically into sealed plastic bags.

The sealed bags would then be packed into wooden crates before delivery.

Besides distributing specially

packed coins and minting circulation coins, Royal Mint also produces brilliant uncirculated coins, bullions, coins sets, tokens, medals and medallions.

Among the commemorative coins minted at the Shah Alam operations include those for the Millennium Celebration, Thomas/Uber Cup Championship in Kuala Lumpur, the declaration of Shah Alam as a city, the 1st Malaysian Formula One Grand Prix and the centenary of Kuala Lumpur's founding.

Other commemorative coins to be launched by Royal Mint include those for the South East Asian

Games 2001 in Kuala Lumpur, the centenary of the Forestry Department and Warriors Day 2001.

Royal Mint also has a website <http://theroyalmint.net> for shoppers to make online purchases of its souvenir items such as stationery, watches, caps and shirts, in addition to its commemorative coins collection.

Royal Mint also produces the country's first gold bullion coin.

The *Kijang Emas Gold Bullion Coin* would be launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in Kuala Lumpur tomorrow.