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Asnita records 10pc gain in 2nd half 2001

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THE RM162 million Amanah Saham Wanita (Asnita) recorded a dividend-adjusted gain of 10 per cent in the second half of 2001 compared with a 4.9 per cent decline for the first six months of the year.

Although the gain was below the Kuala Lumpur Composite Index's (KLCI) 17.4 per cent gain for the period, the unit trust outperformed RHB Islamic Index which gained a modest 1.1 per cent.

Managers of the fund, Hijrah Unit Trust Management Bhd (HUTMB), expect a robust 2002 for the industry due to increasing industry players from unit trust management companies to third party distributors.

"You will see a stronger presence of financial planning as the key product marketing tool for most financial solution such as insurance, unit trusts and banking solution," HUTMB executive chairman Rohani Datuk Mohd Shahrir said.

She also anticipated increased pressure for players to reduce fees and the offering of other incentives such as bonus units to attract investors.

"Tapping into the EPF (Employees Provident Fund) will be the main strategy, besides the cash and debt market, to close sales of unit trusts," Rohani said.

She added that there will also be a resurgence of Islamic bond funds as investors shy away from risks associated with investing in equities.

Asnita recorded an overall return of 4.7 per cent in 2001 beating the KLCI's 2.4 per cent rise. The fund also performed favourably against the RHB Islamic Index which fell 12.1 per cent in 2001.

Asked whether Malaysia could attain a 3 per cent growth this year as indicated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, she said it was too early to say.

"We will most likely be able to achieve the forecast. Most businesses which had experienced the roller-coaster ride in 2001 would have come off more resilient to face new challenges ahead. Restructuring of debt for companies listed on the KLSE and bank mergers would have also been completed by mid-2002 thus reducing uncertainties in the market," Rohani told Business Times.

"Should the electronics sector recover globally and our electronics exports improve, we will be able to achieve that figure," she said.

The fund's exposure changed little in the second half of 2001 although its equity exposure fluctuated between a low of 56.7 per cent and a year-end high of 65.4 per cent.

The high exposure in the trading and services sector reflects Asnita's preference for liquid heavyweight counters.

Meanwhile, according to Asnita's fund manager Nurhayati Abdul Hamid, the liquidity and interest rates environment are currently positive for the stock market.

Improved corporate earnings and global sentiments would be able to trigger a rally while positive external flows would also provide the added impetus.

"On the global front, we believe that the main risk factor would be linked to any indication of a fall back in the recovery of the electronic sector or any sharp rise in US interest rates," she said.

The fund size as at end-2001 stood at 436.5 million units or an equivalent of RM162,450,567.54.

There were 84,456 unitholders representing a 4 per cent increase from

81,149 investors the previous year.
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