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## Malaysian pavilion, food court in California

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MALAYSIA'S food cuisine, already a favourite among visiting global connoisseurs, is set to make a strong presence in the US.

Plans are afoot to promote and market the local delights, especially the halal food to the US market.

Already in the pipeline is the Selangor Agriculture Development Corp (SADC)-Armada Global (a US company) US\$12 million (US\$1 = RM3.80) pavilion and food court project which will be built in California.

With the theme "the Street of Malaya", the pavilion and food court, which is expected to begin construction from January next year, will showcase the Malaysian cuisine to Americans.

Expected to be completed within seven months, the pavilion and food court is strategically located adjacent to the world-famous Disneyland park in Anaheim.

Armada Global chief executive officer Hayati Kassim said she considered the choice of the pavilion and food court being located next door to the international landmark, which receives more than 65 million visitors annually, as a goldmine for the local food entrepreneurs.

"We expect a substantial number of them to pay a visit to the pavilion," Hayati told newsmen after the signing of a memorandum of agreement on the project between SADC and Armada Global in Shah Alam.

According to Hayati, the project is expected to generate a first year profit before tax of between US\$10 and US\$17 million and this is expected to increase to between US\$20 and US\$25 million from the second year onwards.

"Positioning a halal food service in the US market is not an easy task. From our experiences, it takes a mammoth effort, enormous perseverance, and diligence to realise the dream.

"It is crucial for Malaysian entrepreneurs to keep up with other countries' efforts in promoting their products to the global market. We need to be similarly aggressive in doing this, as shown by the Thais who have already planned for the establishment of over 8,015 restaurants in the US," Hayati said.

She said the joint venture project was conceived after having undergone a thorough two-year survey and research programme of the US consumer market.

"It was important for us to attain vital market data and strategic business information about the preferences of the target market before going ahead with the project," she said.

SADC general manager Datuk Karim Marzuki said SADC and Armada Global have submitted food samples to the US Food and Drugs Authority (USFDA) for approval recently.

"We are glad that they (USFDA) have approved 23 of our food products for the American market," he said.

To be built a 0.4ha, the pavilion will be equipped with a central kitchen facility to facilitate the preparation and distribution of meat-based food to stall operators at the pavilion, as well as to various institutional markets.

While the food court, featuring a blend of both British colonial and Malaysian design architecture, will also be a stage for cultural activities and performances for visitors to feast on throughout the year.

Karim said other Malaysian state governments, including that of Malacca,

Perak, Perlis, and Johor, had shown their interest in featuring their respective state's local cuisines and cultural gala at the pavilion.

Meanwhile, Hayati said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will be invited to grace the opening of the pavilion and food court, expected to take place in September next year.