

# SME WEEKLY NEWS

(25 September 2017 – 29 September 2017)

Countries	Highlights
<p><b>MALAYSIA</b></p> <p><b>850 SMEs sign up for eTrade programme</b></p>	<p>MATRADE said that over 850 SMEs have signed up for the eTrade programme. The programme seeks to accelerate exports via e-commerce. MATRADE's Deputy CEO II of Exporters Development said that she expects to achieve the targeted 1,500 SMEs under the first phase of the eTrade programme by end of October, under a collaboration with Alibaba.com as part of the Digital Free Trade Zone initiative. MATRADE offers incentives in the form of e-vouchers for Malaysian SMEs who list their products on Alibaba.com. With the listing, SMEs also enjoy value-added services like microsite listing and showcase, with training by Alibaba and its Malaysian agents so that companies learn how to attract visitors to their products. Deputy Minister of MITI, Datuk Ahmad Maslan urged SMEs to utilise the available FTAs. SMEs should focus on countries that have an FTA with Malaysia and export to these countries to benefit from tax breaks and reduced trade barriers.</p> <p><i>(Source: The Sun Daily, 25 September 2017)</i></p>
<p><b>MALAYSIA</b></p> <p><b>Oracle Digital Hub Malaysia a boon to SMEs in Asia Pacific</b></p>	<p>SMEs in Malaysia and 21 other countries in Asia Pacific will get access and support to the cloud solutions and resources they need to power digital transformation with the opening of Oracle's first digital hub in Southeast Asia. Oracle's new digital hub in Malaysia is set to help SMEs leverage on Oracle Cloud solutions to streamline operations, boost innovation and build a platform for growth. The digital hub houses a newly hired digital team focused on helping mid-sized organisations transition to the cloud quickly and easily. Customers that want to buy entirely online can also utilise the click-to-buy Oracle Accelerated Buying Experience. With Oracle Cloud, SMEs now have access to the most modern solutions in the market, at an affordable price as well as timely, personalised and effective support. Using cloud and digital technologies in tandem, Malaysian SMEs can now be more competitive as they build a larger presence in the digital economy.</p> <p><i>(Source: Digital News Asia, 27 September 2017)</i></p>
<p><b>SINGAPORE</b></p> <p><b>Govt bringing forward another S\$700m of construction projects to help SME contractors</b></p>	<p>THE government is bringing forward another S\$700 million in construction projects, among other measures, to help local SME contractors through the difficult time the sector is currently experiencing. This is on top of the S\$700 million worth of public infrastructure projects that the government is bringing forward to 2017 and 2018, as announced during the Budget this year, bringing the total amount to S\$1.4 billion. Minister for National Development and Second Minister for Finance, Lawrence Wong said that the projects will generally be smaller, such as upgrading of neighbourhood facilities that will benefit SME contractors. These projects are expected to be launched over the next one to two years but some projects may stretch to end-2019 as time will be needed for design and planning, he noted. Mr Wong added that the government will continue to monitor the industry closely and adjust the pace of the public sector projects if necessary.</p> <p><i>(Source: The Business Times, 28 September 2017)</i></p>
<p><b>THAILAND</b></p> <p><b>Government to help small exporters hurt by baht appreciation</b></p>	<p>The baht has strengthened by 7-8% against the US dollar since early this year, sparking concern among exporters whose product prices will no longer be competitive internationally. Thus, the government has earmarked 1.5 billion baht to help small businesses adversely affected by the baht's appreciation and to support upgrades to their production facilities. A committee charged with promoting SMEs has allocated 1 billion baht in soft loans to SMEs and tech start-ups seeking to upgrade production capacity. Also, businesses owners affected by the rising baht would be coached in hedging against currency volatility and receive discount coupons worth 30,000 baht each. The government plans to spend about 500 million baht to address the currency shift's impact. The Bank of Thailand, Thai Bankers Association and SME Development Bank will organise training courses for SMEs.</p> <p><i>(Source: The Nation, 25 September 2017)</i></p>

**VIETNAM**

**SHB offers new preferential package to SMEs**

The Saigon Hanoi Commercial Joint Stock Bank (SHB) recently announced that it will launch a VNĐ2.5 trillion (US\$109.9 million) credit package with preferential interest rate from 6.5% per year for SMEs. The package will be divided into two programmes, “Giving Strength to Business” (GSB) and “Quick Financing by Area” (QFA). The GSB programme targets businesses in 17 industries, including medicine, pharmaceutical chemistry, communication equipment, rubber, plastic, fertiliser, electronics, garment & textile, footwear and farm produce. Loans are mostly short terms at less than six months, designed to help firms promote production and business activities in the last months of the year. Meanwhile, the QFA programme is built basing on specific socio-economic situations of the Southeast, South central, Mekong Delta, Central Highland, North Central & Red River Delta regions and Ho Chi Minh. SMEs in those regions are able to access to loans at the minimum interest rate of 6.5% for terms of up to 12 months.

*(Source: Viet Nam News, 25 September 2017)*

## JOURNEY INTO THE SOLAR INDUSTRY

Ko Chuan Zhen, co-founder and executive director of Plus Solar Systems Sdn Bhd, is today a leading specialist and noted professional in the renewable energy industry. However, his foray into the engineering field during his tertiary education years was not fuelled by interest but instead, the influence of his parents. However, the final year of his degree studies marked the turn of events.

Ko's final year project was to research and create an "Automotive Solar Powered Ventilation System – Hybrid Photovoltaic Solution", which had him remodelling his father's car ventilation system into a solar-powered one. Backed by guidance from his lecturer and teammates, Ko created a successful prototype, before going on to win the Asia Pacific ICT Awards (APICTA) Student Project for Asia Pacific Region – setting in motion the start of an entrepreneurial journey into the solar industry.

Harbouring this deep-rooted passion, Ko set foot back on home soil with one aim – to establish a leading renewable energy company in Malaysia. Prior to his entrepreneurial endeavour, Ko was



attached to some of the industry's top global players where he amassed the necessary technical skills, leadership qualities and business networks vital towards building a successful business of his own. Following the work attachments, he encountered an opportune time to venture into the solar industry and strike out on his own together with his friends Poh Tyng Huei and Ryan Oh Zhi Kang.

The trio then brainstormed ways to capitalise on what Ko saw would be a global rise in the clean energy trend. At the same time, Malaysia was warming up to

the solar energy bandwagon, introducing the Renewable Energy Act in 2011 and launching the Feed-in Tariff policy that popularised the uptake of solar power system installations nationwide. Riding on this opportune timing, the trio established Leaf Energy Sdn Bhd, a solar consultancy company in 2012.

A year later, they saw much need for a quality turnkey solutions provider and as a result, Plus Solar Systems Sdn Bhd (+SOLAR) was conceived, providing end-to-end engineering, procurement, construction and commissioning services to clients. Helmed by a four-member team back in 2013, the company has since grown to a headcount of 60 today. Some 90% of the company projects are from the commercial sector, including solar farms, industrial properties and commercial buildings with Green Building Index (GBI) certificates.

Operations aside, the three entrepreneurs have set up an investment arm in 2015. Through Leaf Solar Sdn Bhd, they are now the owners of two solar power plants in Kedah and Penang. Within the same year, they established a new energy solutions company in Singapore to tap into the emerging market in South-East Asia.

As business expanded, the realisation that there exists a huge gap between local education syllabus and the demands of the clean energy sector grew. To address this, the friends established +SOLAR Academy as their Corporate Social Responsibility programme. Under this programme, +SOLAR provides industrial training to undergraduates, takes up speaking appointments with academic institutions and professional bodies, and collaborates with the academia on technical research and development.

*(Source: The Star, 25 September 2017)*

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