

## SMEs In Brief

### Miti to help capture Middle East SMEs halal food product market

**PASIR PUTEH:** The Ministry of International Trade and Industry will take efforts to assist local SMEs to capture the exported SME halal food product market of the Middle East.

Its Deputy Minister, Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir, said while local SME halal products have already penetrated the market and are accepted by the Organisation of Islamic Conference member countries, they have not been able to meet the huge demand.

"The demand (for food products) include that needed by pilgrims performing their Hajj at Mecca and Madinah during the Hajj season," said Mukhriz. He said Malaysia had a greater potential to market the products considering that more than 25,000 Muslims in the country performed their Hajj every year.

Expressing disappointment that the local SMEs could not meet the demand, he said his ministry will be taking measures to encourage SMEs to increase their production capacity.

### Cradle Fund looking at increasing commercialisation rate

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Cradle Fund Sdn Bhd, the company that manages Cradle Investment Programme (CIP) under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance (MoF), will be increasing not only the percentage of cases commercialised, but also increasing the quality of the successes achieved by past Cradle recipients.

Cradle Fund chief executive officer Nazrin Hassan said: "We are actively on the lookout for good quality proposals especially from budding companies as our CIP 500 seed fund has received good response since its inception.

He added: "In total, Cradle has funded 386 ideas to date since September 2003 and is still one of the few technology grants in Malaysia that has not yet exhausted its funds for the period of the 9th Malaysian Plan, which ends this year."

### Government considers new allocation for SME Bank's factory scheme

**SHAH ALAM:** The government is considering an application from SME Bank for new allocation under the 10th Malaysia Plan to implement and develop its factory scheme.

Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir said the ministry through SME Bank was giving priority to entrepreneurship programmes, particularly those involving small and

medium scale Bumiputera entrepreneurs, in the country's development.

"To date, the government has allocated RM334.76 million for the scheme nationwide," he said. SME Bank chairman Datuk Gumuri Hussain said a study showed that the profit achieved by the factory scheme participants rose 88.1 per cent compared to the rise in work productivity at 47.6 per cent and increase in paid-up capital at 21.4 per cent.

### Stanchart launches women in business resources centre

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Standard Chartered Bank has opened the Women in Business Resource Centre, an on-line tool designed to help women entrepreneurs start and grow their own business.

Managing director and CEO Osman Morad said the bank believes women looking to start or grow their businesses have huge potential in Malaysia.

As the global women entrepreneurs owned 40 to 50 per cent of businesses in the developing market, the centre will be a great tool for them to develop their entrepreneurial skills and progress to the next level, he said.

There are close to 83,000 woman-owned enterprises, mainly in the services, manufacturing and agriculture sectors, which are subject to increase in the near future.

"As very few resources are targeted specifically at women entrepreneurs in these markets and failing to address the specific challenges they face, our resource centre is designed to directly address these challenges by providing a variety of educational and interactive components aimed at SMEs," he said.

### Selangor to launch micro-credit scheme to help poor

**SHAH ALAM:** The Selangor state government will set up a micro-credit scheme to help the poor and those in the low-income group increase their earnings and break the poverty cycle.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim said the initial fund to start the scheme would come from the RM392 million debt payments by Talam Corp Bhd and from the state-owned companies.

"Bangladesh's Grameen Bank uses this concept and they have been successful in helping the poor. The scheme would be introduced in the rural areas before extending it to the urban poor. Those earning RM1,500 and below are classified as poor and eligible to apply for the loan," he said.

- Compiled from Bernama