Standardisation for Halal Food
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Halal products are fast gaining worldwide recognition as a new benchmark for safety and quality assurance. Products that are produced with Halal certification are readily acceptable by Muslim consumers as well as consumers from other religions. This acceptance is due to the wholesomeness concept of halal, which covers not only the Shariah requirement, but also the hygiene, sanitation and safety aspects.

The average global halal food trade is estimated at RM 600 billion per year. Therefore, there is tremendous potential in the development and production of halal products especially food, and we must put in greater efforts to gain and expand our market share. Halal certification is a powerful marketing tool for both the Muslim and non-Muslim producers, as there is an increasing awareness on the part of Muslim consumers all over the world on their obligation to consume halal food.

The recently launched Malaysian Standard, MS 1500 “General Guidelines on the Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage of Halal Food” prescribes the practical guidelines for the food industry on the preparation and handling of halal food - a basic requirement for food product and food trade or business in Malaysia. Implemented together with related standards - MS 1480 and MS 1514 on food safety and food hygiene - we can be assured that the food we consume is not only safe but halal.

This edition of Standards and Quality News focuses on the standard for halal food as well as other related requirement of halal such as hygiene and safety. We hope this issue will be able to provide useful and updated information on the current requirement and practices for Halal food.

Zurina Mohd Bistari
The wholesomeness concept of Halal food covers the lawful requirements of the Syariah law (law of Islam) and the requirements for good food, in terms of hygiene, sanitation and safety. To achieve the wholesomeness concept, both aspects need to be adhered to and implemented together. Failure in any of it will cripple the wholesomeness concept of Halal food. This concept is adopted in Malaysian Standard, MS 1500 Halal Food – Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage – General Guidelines.

This standard lays out comprehensive requirements according to Shariah law and also the requirements of food manufacturing and food servicing chain from processing to handling, distribution, storage, display, servings, packaging and labelling. The aesthetic aspects - hygiene, sanitation and food safety - are also included as part of the requirement.

In the Third National Agricultural Policy, the government has emphasised in developing Malaysia as International Halal Food Hub. This decision is made in order to increase export market of the country by capturing the global Halal food market. In line with this vision, Halal standard is established and it will be utilised by the appointed Halal certification body, the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) in their Halal Certification scheme.

The Halal Malaysian Standard MS 1500:2004 Halal Food - Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage - General Guidelines is the first revision of MS 1500:2000 which was formerly titled General Guidelines on the Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage of Halal Food. Bahasa Malaysia version of the standard is also available, titled Makanan Halal - Pengeluaran, Penyediaan, Pengendalian dan Penyimpanan - Garis panduan umum. This Malaysian Standard was developed by the Technical Committee on Halal Food under the authority of the Halal Standards Industry Standards Committee. The standard prescribes practical guidelines for the food industry on the preparation and handling of Halal food, including nutrient supplement, and to serve as basic requirement for food product and food trade or business in Malaysia. The standard is recommended to be used together with MS 1480, the standard
on Food safety according to hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) system and MS 1514, on General principles of food hygiene. Both standards cover the hygiene, sanitation and food safety aspects in the food processing and preparation chain.

Shariah law is the fundamental guide in developing the Halal standard. The laws of Islam applicable are the Mazhab of Shafie and any other Mazhabs of Malik, Hambali and Hanafi approved by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to be in force in the Federal Territory, or the Ruler of any State to be in force in the states, or any fatwa approved by the Islamic Authority.

The standard emphasises the sources of Halal food, which include animals (land and aquatic), plants, mushrooms, microorganisms, natural minerals, chemicals and drinks. The requirement on genetically modified food is also covered in this standard. Besides the requirements as laid out by Shariah law in determining the permitted sources of food, the standard also emphasises that the food is safe and not poisonous, intoxicating or hazardous to health. The standard also lay out is the slaughtering requirement for the poultry and ruminant animals.

The standard makes compulsory the requirement to physically separate Halal from non-Halal production, preparation and handling activities. The separation is also applicable to the storage activities where Halal products are to be clearly labelled to avoid being mixed or contaminated with non-Halal products.

The Revised Malaysian Standard MS 1500

Towards improving the Halal standard, several major amendments were made. The definition of the three types of najs, (briefly - najs are things impure that are themselves not permissible) are incorporated - Najs al-mughallazah, najs al-mutawassitah and najs al-mukhaffah, which are severe, medium and light najs respectively. Najs al-mughallazah, can only be cleansed through dibagh. Thus, Dibagh or washing method and ritual cleansing according to Shariah law is also incorporated in this revision.

To enhance the understanding of slaughtering, figures and methods of slaughtering are added. Additional slaughtering requirements are also introduced, including the act of slaughtering for long necked animals.

Hygiene, sanitation and safety are important factors in manufacturing and preparing food. It is clearly mentioned in the standard that these factors are pre-requisites in preparing Halal food. Thus, Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) or Good Hygiene Practice (GHP) is a compulsory requirement in preparing Halal food. Mean while, implementation of food safety system, where Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) is the recommended system, is on voluntary basis.

Another major amendment is the deletion of stunning (mechanical and pneumatic), as it often created shubahah (doubt) in determining the life-or-dead or permanent injury status in the animals. Even though stunning is not recommended, the type of stunning allowed is electrical stunning or any other stunning that is permitted by Majlis Fatwa.
Introduction
The food industry is an evergreen industry and halal food is the latest trend in the world market. Customers’ demand for halal food is increasing not only in the Islamic countries but also in Europe and America. Demand for halal food is estimated at US$150 billion a year with the increase in world Muslim population to an estimated 2 billion people. Taking into account the increase of halal product market, the Malaysian Government intends in making Malaysia a regional halal hub. Food manufacturers in Malaysia should take this opportunity to increase the country’s halal products for export purposes.

The Government has, since 2003, streamlined the implementation of the Halal Certification. The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), is now the lead agency in the conferment of the halal certificates and labels at both the federal and state level. JAKIM is responsible for issuing the certificates for halal products for exports and imports, while the state governments issue halal certificates for local consumption. A new Halal label was also introduced in 2003 for the purpose of coordinating the use of a uniformed label at federal as well as state level. Earlier the fifteen different labels used by the states and JAKIM had caused confusion among applicants and importers. The new label when issued by the state will bear a state code in the label, while the label issued by JAKIM will not have any code number. The new label has been registered under the Trade Mark Act 1976 and the Trade Mark Regulations 1997.

Halal Certification
Halal food certification refers to the examination of food processes in its preparation, slaughtering, cleaning, processing, handling, disinfecting, storing, transportation and management practices. The application of halal should apply to all stages of processing “from farm to table”.

Halal certification provides the following benefits:

i. Consumer confidence – it allows the consumers to make an informed choice of their purchase

ii. Competitive advantage – manufacturers can use it as a marketing tool to secure bigger market share as halal food is suitable for both Muslims and non-Muslims. At international level, it can enhance the marketability of the products especially in Muslim countries.

iii. Quality – it indicates that the food product not only fulfils halal requirements, but also strict hygiene practices

iv. For the authority – it provides a
mechanism to audit and monitor halal food.

The Halal Certification process is shown in Appendix 1.

The Malaysian Standard MS 1500 on Halal food preparation and operation provides guidelines and reference for the halal certification. It is expected to draw more interest from the manufacturers to obtain the halal certification. As for the consumer, this standard can be used as a reference as well as information on halal food.

**Compliance to Halal requirements**

With the certification, manufacturers are obliged to act responsibly to maintain the halal status of the food they produce. Manufacturers must ensure during all phases of the production, the raw materials, equipment, tools and materials used must not be najs, mixed with any najs material or has been in contact with najs materials. The product and raw materials used must also be safe and will not cause harm to the health.

Ensuring a product is halal is not only limited to the materials and ingredients used. Halal requirements cover all aspects of preparation, processing, packaging, distribution and all related processes. Any equipment found to be in contact or contaminated with non halal materials must be cleansed according to the Syariah requirements.

In Halal food, cleanliness and hygiene is very closely related to food safety. This is an important prerequisite halal certification and the requirement covers personal hygiene, attire, equipment and working environment.

**Employees’ Understanding on Halal requirements**

All employees required to be trained to understand the halal concept, as well as their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the products are handled accordingly.

Manufacturers are encouraged to establish a quality assurance unit to monitor all requirements of halal are complied with at all time, especially in critical areas such as procurement. The unit should also ensure that any non-compliance is immediately rectified.

**HALAL Advisor**

Establishment of an advisory panel competent in related Syariah requirements on halal is also encouraged. This panel can be referred to for new product development so that early control can be put in place.

**Conclusion**

The halal food issue is a sensitive and serious matter to the Muslims. Halal certification will help boost the confidence of the Muslim consumers that the food and product they purchase are not only halal but also hygienic and safe.

As Malaysia has a huge potential to develop the halal food industry and become a halal food hub, manufacturers should take the opportunity to enhance their production technology and systems to produce and market halal products. As Malaysia’s Halal certification scheme is recognized world wide due to its stringent criteria, manufacturers should leverage on this advantage to be more competitive.
Severe outbreaks of food poisoning are guaranteed to make media headlines. However, less severe, and far more frequent cases of food poisoning occur throughout Malaysia not being reported. Most of these cases are caused by negligence, as many people do not know how to handle, store or prepare food nor are they able to spot potential causes of food spoilage in grocery stores or food outlets.

Why food hygiene is important?

Food hygiene is important to be applied by food producers in order to provide foods that are safe and suitable for consumption. They also need to ensure that consumers are provided with clear and easily understood information - by way of labeling or other appropriate means - on storage, handling and preparation of the food. This will prevent food from contamination from food borne pathogens. Food hygiene practice should apply throughout the food supply chain from primary production through to final stage for consumption; setting out the key hygienic controls and conditions at each stage of production.

Consumers on the other hand should recognize their role by following relevant instructions and applying appropriate food hygiene measures.

What is safe food?

Safe food is food that does not cause harm to the consumers when it is prepared and/or eaten according to its intended use.

In order to assure the food is safe the food producers should take necessary steps to comply with Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and Good Hygiene Practice (GHP). Good Manufacturing Practice is where the producers apply the combination of manufacturing and quality control procedures to ensure the products are consistently manufactured to their specifications. The Codex General Principles of Food Hygiene and the Malaysian Standard MS 1514 on General Principles of Food Hygiene lay down a firm foundation in hygienic practices in ensuring food hygiene. These principles are internationally recognised and the guidelines can be used together with other specific and appropriate codes of hygienic practice.

There are several key principles that are critical to assure food hygiene:
Emphasis should be on primary production, which should be carried out in an area where the presence of potential harmful substances does not contaminate the food until it reached unacceptable level. The fundamental is that hygienic practice should reduce the likelihood of introducing hazards which may adversely affect the safety of foods at later stage of the food chain, for example hazards from pesticides, antibiotics or microorganisms.

Establishments or premises where food is produced ought to be located in areas free from potential sources of contamination, such as areas that are prone to pest infestation. Equipment and facilities should be located, designed and constructed to ensure minimum contamination, easy maintenance and cleaning, and regularly disinfected and protected against pest. Overall the layout of the establishment should be able to promote hygienic practices and at the same time able to reduce cross contamination during production. Personnel hygiene facilities such as wash hand sinks, hand dryers, toilets, and changing rooms should be adequate.

Control of operation through preventive measures is consistently implemented throughout the system to reduce the risk from food hazards at the appropriate stages of the production. Food business operators can control food hazards through the application of management systems such as HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point). Codex Alimentarius Commission, in 1993, has endorsed HACCP system as an effective means in assuring food safety.

Other hygiene measures include control on length and temperature of cooking, cooling, processing and storage. This will prevent food spoilage and contamination by physical, chemical or microbiological, incoming materials (including packaging materials), water supply, air and steam.

The type of control and supervision required depend on the size of the business, the nature of activities and the type of food involved. Managers and supervisors should have enough knowledge of food hygiene principles and practices to be able to judge potential risks, take appropriate preventive and corrective actions and ensure effective monitoring takes place. Where necessary, appropriate documentation and records should be established and maintained. Recall procedures should also be established.

Ensure adequate and appropriate maintenance and cleaning program, pest control system, waste removal and storage, and sanitation systems.

Endure adequate control measures during transportation to prevent contamination from dust, fumes, or fluctuation of temperature and humidity.

Product should be labelled with lot identification and product information. For requirement on food labeling, refer to Food Regulation 1985.

Workers who are in direct or indirect contact with food should be trained and/or instructed in food hygiene to a level appropriate with the operations they are performing.

In summary, food hygiene contain steps and procedures that control the operational conditions within a food establishment, allowing for favorable environmental conditions for production of food that are safe and suitable for human consumption. Food hygiene is the basis for the production and preparation of safe food. Unsafe food may cause food poisoning and food borne illnesses. Thus food safety has impact on individual health.

References:
1. Malaysian Standard MS 1514:2001 General Principles of Food Hygiene
3. Malaysian Standard MS 1480:1999 Food Safety According to HACCP System
We need food to live. We have the right to expect food that we eat to be safe and suitable for consumption. Food safety has been of concern to humankind since the dawn of history and this concern is growing as foodborne diseases have remain one of the most widespread public health problems in this contemporary world that we live in. Outbreaks of foodborne illness can damage trade and lead to loss of earnings, unemployment and litigation. To avoid these adverse human health and economic consequences of foodborne illness and food spoilage; effective hygiene control measures need to be implemented. Everyone, including farmers and growers, manufacturers and processors, food handlers, and governments consumers has a responsibility to assure that food is safe and suitable for consumption.

In summary, ensuring food safe for consumption is EVERYBODY’S responsibility. However, due to real issues such as lack of sufficient resources, knowledge, different types of eating habits, emergence of new food, new preparation and distribution techniques have made the task even more difficult. Hence, there is a need for a preventive and cost-effective food safety assurance method. The HACCP System has proven to be such a system.

The HACCP System is a scientific, rational and systematic approach to identification, assessment and control of hazards during production, processing, manufacturing, preparation and use of food to ensure that food is safe when consumed (i.e. it does not present an unacceptable risk to health)

The additional benefits of the HACCP System can be summarized as follows:

- The HACCP system allows for the identification of conceivable, reasonably-expected hazards, even where failure have not previously been experienced. It is therefore particularly useful for new operations
- The HACCP system is sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes introduced, such as progress of equipment design, improvements in processing procedures and technological developments related to the product.
- With the HACCP system one can expect an improvement in the relationship between
  a) food processors and food inspectors / regulators, and
  b) food processors and consumers.

The HACCP system provides scientifically-sound basis for demonstrating that all reasonable precautions have been taken to prevent a hazard from reaching the consumer. In this way, it encourages confidence in the safety of food products and thus promotes both confidence in the food industry and stability of food businesses.

- Data collected facilitates the work of food inspectors / regulators for auditing purposes.
- The HACCP system is applicable to the whole food chain, from the raw material to the end-product, i.e. growing, harvesting, processing or manufacturing, transport distribution, preparation and consumption.
- The application of HACCP systems can promote international trade by increasing confidence in food safety.
The HACCP system can be readily integrated into management systems, e.g. Total Quality Management, ISO 9000, etc. and Halal.

The successful application of HACCP requires the full commitment and involvement of management and the workforce. It also requires a multidisciplinary approach; this multidisciplinary approach should include, when appropriate, expertise in agronomy, veterinary health, production, microbiology, medicine, public health, food technology and environmental health.

Hence, the application of HACCP is compatible with other management systems such as ISO 9000 and Halal. However for Muslims there is another issue that need to be addressed and that is, the safe food must also be Halal. This means that the food chain must be safe as well as halal. The halal aspects encompasses the sourcing of halal raw material, handling, processing equipment, processing aids, packaging, storage, transportation, distribution and re-tailing.

The combination of HACCP and Halal ensures the food is not only safe but halal. This combination is a powerful marketing tool for both the Muslim and non-Muslim food industries, as there is an increasing awareness of Muslims all over the world on their obligation to consume halal food. This trend of increasing demand for halal foods is expected to continue in parallel with an increasing Muslim population. Furthermore the Islamic awareness of halal food is expanding worldwide especially in the non-Muslim countries. Of late, the halal market surged with the global increasing awareness of the importance of food safety after the recent outbreak of global BSE food contamination in Europe and the new Commonwealth Independent States, where the populations are majority Muslims.

The market for halal food products may come from Muslims and non-Muslim countries. It is estimated that the average global halal food trade is around USD$ 150 billion or RM 600 billion per year. In order to capture this enormous market of halal and safe foods, food industries should seriously endeavour to get information on halal food and the halal food production. This means that the halal food cannot be in any contact with haram food or materials and the slaughtering process of halal animals should be done according to Shariah law and completely separated from non-halal animals.

The Malaysian Standard MS 1500 "General Guidelines on the Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage of Halal Food" prescribes the practical guidelines for the food industry on the preparation and handling of halal food and serve as a basic requirement for food product and food trade or business in Malaysia. In conducting HACCP - Halal Certification, these Guidelines can be used in conjunction with another two Malaysian Standards MS 1480 and MS 1514. These two Malaysian Standards are complementary to one another in that the pre-requisites or the hygiene and sanitation aspects are required to be established and implemented prior to the establishment of either HACCP or Halal system.

In conclusion, food must be safe for human consumption. An additional requirement for Muslims is that they require the safe food to be also halal because their lives are guided by Islamic or Shariah Law. They are required to consume only halal foods and avoid foods, which are non-halal or haram or food that contain najis. With the increasing awareness of their Islamic dietary requirements, Muslim consumers now demand more information on food sources and its processing. So, it makes good sense for food industries/ producers to take great heed of this trend by labelling the food properly and especially so, the regulatory bodies are consistently monitoring the authenticity of halal food sold in the market place.

Food safety has been of concern to humankind since the dawn of history and this concern is growing as foodborne diseases has remain one of the most widespread public health problems in this contemporary world that we live in.

Implementing HACCP and Halal Systems is the next logical step for food industries. HACCP systems ensures that the product is safe whilst the halal system ensures that the food can be consumed by anyone including non-Muslims.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) has prepared Guidelines on each system namely, Guidelines for the application of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) system CAC/GL 18 and the General Guidelines for the use of the term halal.

The common elements of the two Guidelines are:
- Both systems require sound and scientific knowledge on the raw materials eg. source or origin types
- Both systems require hygiene and sanitation to be implemented
- Both systems require all possible hazards to be identified and assessed

Both system require critical control points in a process (at which the hazard might pose a risk)
- Both systems require monitoring of the critical limits or levels
- Both systems require preventive measures and corrective actions at certain steps of a process in the food production
- Both systems require a specific team to be established in the company/ establishment who are responsible for the effective implementation and monitoring of respective system
The Industry Standards Committee (ISC) on Halal Standards, or also known as ISC I, is one of the newly established ISCs. Its establishment was approved by the Malaysian Standards and Accreditation Council (MSDAM) at its meeting held on 18 February 2003. The scope of the ISC is standardisation in field of generic management systems, and food and non-food products from the Islamic perspective. The scope excludes development of standards related to specific products and industry sectors. Members of the ISC comprise of representatives from the following organisations and associations:

| Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) | Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI) |
| Department of Standards Malaysia (DSM) | Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs |
| Federation of Malaysian Consumers’ Association (FOMCA) | National Pharmaceutical Control Bureau, Ministry of Health |
| Department of Veterinary Services | Institute of Quality Malaysia |
| Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) | Muslim Consumers’ Association of Malaysia |
| Food Quality Control Division, Ministry of Health | SIRIM Berhad |
| Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) | Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM) |
Tuan Haji Nik Mustapha Nik Hassan, the Deputy Director of Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM) is the Chairman of the ISC and Puan Maziah Mukhtar of SIRIM Berhad is the Secretary. Currently, there are only two Technical Committees (TC) under this ISC, which are TC on Management System from Islamic Perspectives and TC on Halal Food and Islamic Consumer Goods.

Being a newly established committee, so far only one standard, the Malaysian Standards MS 1500 Halal Food – Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage – General Guidelines has been developed by the ISC.

TC on Management System from Islamic Perspectives

Tuan Haji Nik Mustapha Nik Hassan chairs the TC on Management System from Islamic Perspectives and Puan Siti Shapura Mashood of SIRIM Berhad is the Secretary. The scope of this TC is Standardisation in the field of generic management systems from Islamic perspectives. The standards developed by this TC shall be used together with other relevant management systems standards, such as MS ISO 9000 Quality Management Systems series. Currently the TC is deliberating on a new project titled ISO 9001 from Islamic Perspectives – Interpretative Guidelines.

TC on Halal Food and Islamic Consumer Goods

The TC on Halal Food and Islamic Consumer Goods is chaired by Tuan Haji Mustapha Abdul Rahman, the Director General of Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and Cik Zainorni Mohd Janis of SIRIM Berhad is the secretary. The scope of this TC is Standardisation in the field of Halal food and other Islamic consumer goods, excluding development of standards for specific products.

The TC’s first project was the revision of MS 1500:2000 General Guidelines on the Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage of Halal Food. The standard was approved as Malaysian Standards by the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation in June 2004 with a new title MS 1500 Halal Food – Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage – General Guidelines.

The TC is currently preparing a standard on non-food consumer products (barang gunaan Halal).
SIRIM Berhad has recently taken a further step in enhancing the development of Malaysian Standards it signed an agreement with ASTM International (originally known as American Society for Testing and Materials).

The partnership has strengthened the tie between the two organisations in order to aid in the development of Malaysian Standards to support the country’s economic advancement.

The agreement was established with the main objectives of:

- Promoting knowledge of the standards development activities of each organisation; and
- Utilising the resources of ASTM to strengthen the Malaysian national standards system.

Via the partnership SIRIM Berhad has been granted the rights to:

- Provide all users at the SIRIM Berhad Information Centre with access to collection of current ASTM Standards;
- Facilitate adoption of ASTM Standards where appropriate, as the basis of Malaysian national standards and reference to ASTM Standards where appropriate in Malaysian Standards with suitable recognition given to ASTM copyright and resell the publications in Malaysia;
- Become Participating Member in all relevant ASTM technical committees and receiving all benefits accorded to ASTM members which are:
  - participation on any of ASTM’s technical committees
  - access to the network of other
participants in industries of interest to SIRIM Berhad through electronic “Members Only” pages (for those committees that SIRIM Berhad joins)
- access to information on all ASTM Standards actions
- influence in the development of draft standards through official voting to ensure that the standards meet the needs of Malaysian industry
- greater access to current information affecting specific industries via attendance at standards development meetings, symposia and workshops
- involvement in planning and conducting meetings, including electronic venues
- annual subscription to ASTM’s monthly magazine Standardization News
- reduced symposia/workshop registration fees

• Assist in seeking and recruiting partners for the delivery and implementation of related ASTM initiatives e.g. Interlaboratory Cross-Check (quality control) Program, Technical and Professional Training Program; and
• Jointly sponsor ASTM/SIRIM Berhad industry standards and training programs.

ASTM International is one of the world’s largest voluntary standards development organisations. From the work of over 130 technical standards-writing committees, performed voluntarily by over 30,000 members worldwide ASTM publishes more than 11,000 standards yearly. These standards encompass a wide range of areas.

ASTM Standards have been widely accepted by the local industries especially in the chemical, oil and gas sectors. More often than not, they have also been used as reference or basis when a standard is being developed. It is envisaged that this mutual partnership, practical and market relevance standard is developed to serve the needs of the country.

Website: www.astm.org

"ASTM International is one of the world’s largest voluntary standards development organisations. From the work of over 130 technical standards-writing committees, performed voluntarily by over 30,000 members worldwide ASTM publishes more than 11,000 standards yearly. These standards encompass a wide range of areas."
Seminar on Standardisation for Information Technology, Telecommunication and Multimedia in Malaysia

The seminar on Standardisation for Information Technology, Telecommunication and Multimedia in Malaysia, was held on 10th August 2004 and officiated by Pn. Mariani Mohammad, Director General of Department of Standards Malaysia (DSM).

The event was jointly organised by DSM and SIRIM Berhad and was held at the Auditorium SIRIM Berhad, Level 1 Block 5, Shah Alam, Selangor. More than seventy participants attended the seminar. A total of fourteen papers on selected theme were presented at the seminar with the objectives:

- To recruit experts from various fields in ICT to contribute towards the development of the ICT standards nationally and internationally.
- To increase the awareness on importance of ICT standards.
- To share knowledge and experiences.

Lt. Kol. Husin Jazri, the Chairman for Industry Standards Committee on Information Technology, Telecommunication and Multimedia (ISC G) highlighted in his closing remarks that this seminar would be an “eye opener” to the public on the importance of ICT standards in Malaysia. It’s also an initial step to encourage ICT experts and professionals to participate and contribute in standards development activities nationally and internationally. He also emphasised that an initiative to organise the seminar annually should be implemented in order to ensure its effectiveness in facilitating the National Standards development and participation in the international standards activities as well as promoting mutual recognition and understanding.

The following is the extract from the opening speech delivered by the Director General of Department Of Standards Malaysia (DSM), Pn. Mariani Mohammad:

“On behalf of the Department of Standards, Malaysia (DSM), I would like to wish you a warm welcome to this seminar. I am pleased that today we will have the opportunity to exchange ideas as well as get to know each other better. This seminar is intended for interested parties in the Information Technology and Telecommunication sectors to discuss issues and current developments of the industry, especially with regard to standards and related standardization activities. With the feedback gathered, the existing national standardisation efforts could be further enhanced to better meet the needs of industries and consumers in these sectors.

This is the first time the Department of Standards is conducting such an activity for this sector. This seminar would not have been possible without the kind and generous support of the distinguished speakers from the various agencies. I would also like to record my appreciation for the continued cooperation of members of the Industry Standard Committee on Information Technology (ISC G) who have enabled such a distinguished gathering of experts for this seminar.

The Department of Standards Malaysia, as the national standards body is responsible for all matters pertaining to Standards and Standardisation. This includes the provision of
the necessary technical infrastructure to support standardisation activities. I am happy to note, that in over the 20 years of standardisation activities that have been undertaken in Malaysia, formerly by SIRIM, and now by the Department of Standards Malaysia, much progress has been achieved.

To date, 473 Malaysian Standards have been prepared specifically under the Industry Standard Committee on Information Technology. A total of 3,473 Malaysian Standards now exists and we do hope the provision of incentives for the public and private sector to actively participate in standardisation activities. These may take the form of annual allocation for the public sector and tax deductions for the private sector involved in international standardisation activities.

In the sphere of international standardisation, three truly global international standardisation bodies have come together to advance standards for the benefit of the global community. They are the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). This co-operation will create an equilibrium, where all technical activities that make up the modern world today work together. An example of this partnership is the establishment of JTC 1, which is a joint technical committee on IT between ISO and IEC. Realising that in certain areas there is no clear boundary between technical activities, closer co-operation between the three international standardisation bodies at the policy level has been forged through the formation of the World Standards Cooperation (WSC). This should be reflected at the national level, where the relevant agencies responsible for areas of electrical safety, standards and ICT have to work together to ensure coherence in the national standards system.

In the context of ICT, electronic commerce has emerged as a dynamic, modern form of transactions, which has received adequate attention, especially from the World Trade Organisation (WTO). E-commerce has become one of the most important forms of cooperation in ASEAN too. Standards are designed to reduce obstacles created by incompatibilities arising from the absence of standards or their lack of clarity. In the process of standards development, close attention must be given to address the problems caused by the latter.

Standards in the communications and multimedia industry ensure interconnection, interoperability and non-interference between different systems, as well as assure safety. They allow us to communicate in a cost-effective and reliable manner and to join in the global communities either for business or social purposes. In this information era, standards serve as the modern tools that help us to compete in the global markets.

The seminar we are conducting today is designed to cover all the major aspects of the key policy issues on ICT standardisation. There will be presentations by experts on all the key themes, such as:

(i) Stakeholders of ICT Standards,
(ii) The Application of ICT Standards in Specialise Area,
(iii) How standards can affect the local ICT Industries - View of the Industry/Professional Bodies and
(iv) Use of standards in Information Security

Against this background, the seminar is aimed at updating participants on the emerging standardisation issues on ICT and enhancing their conceptual understanding.
As Malaysia progresses towards becoming a developed nation, the demand for products and material testing increases to meet the local and international customer requirements.

The Chemical Testing Services of SIRIM QAS International Sdn. Bhd. is established to cater to these needs. Operating with 24 highly experienced professionals, the section aims to provide a high standard, cost effective and fast turnaround service to meet the needs of customers.

The Chemical Testing Services is accredited to ISO 17025 and offers a wide range of products and material testing services, from drinking water, food, coating material, textile, paper and construction material to petroleum products, toys and automotive components. The scope of testing includes chemical, physical and microbiological tests. Reliability of the section’s test results are proven with continuous compliance to the ISO 17025 requirement and proficiency testing conducted from time to time with other accredited international laboratories.

With a comprehensive range of testing facilities and a strong network with other centers in SIRIM Berhad, the Chemical Testing Services is capable of testing products according to local and foreign standards including ISO, BS, DIN, and JIS, as well as other manufacturers’ standards. The section caters for R & D testing, compliance or regulatory testing, contract testing and testing for the purpose of certification.

The Chemical Testing Services also contributes towards the implementation of many government regulations and requirements on products such as pharmaceutical products, food, stationeries (colour pencils), construction material (cement and tiles), pesticide residues, fabrics for hospital use and others. The Chemical Testing Services also provide training to other government bodies and agencies on special request to enhance their knowledge on fundamentals of testing and basics in material properties.

With a strong team, the Chemical Testing Services will continue to provide customers with value for money services and contributes in the progress of our country, industries and trades.

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