

Tunku Naquiyuddin - Executive Chairman & Tunku Mohamed Alauddin - Managing Director, Antah Healthcare Group, Malaysia



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Tunku Naquiyuddin and Tunku Mohamed Alauddin, respectively executive chairman and managing director of the Antah Healthcare Group highlight the importance of close business relationships between stakeholders in Malaysia and its role in the success of the group. The current focus of the company is to expand its warehousing facilities, increase distribution channels and new customer segments as well as acquire efficient, effective and renowned products.

Antah Healthcare Group is one of the leading local distributors in the country. Can you explain to our audience Antah's scope of operations?

Tunku Mohamed Alauddin (TMA): Antah Healthcare Group comprises of different entities. Antah Sri Radin is the appointed local representative and distributor for a diverse range of medical equipment from renowned global companies, such as Eschmann's range of medical equipment from the United Kingdom. They have been our partner for more than 50 years and we are realizing around 85 percent of market share for operating tables in government hospitals. We have been operating in Malaysia for 57 years and have built a strong network of partners to establish ourselves as a reliable distributor to provide the best quality equipment for the country. To name a few among the diverse range of products we distribute are surgical lights, autoclaves, operating

equipment and sterilization solutions. We have a team of capable specialists to manage projects on a turnkey basis.

The other wholly owned subsidiary is Antah Pharma to manage the marketing and distribution of goods from the pharmaceutical business sector, which consists of over-the-counter goods and prescription medication. We provide warehousing, marketing and nationwide distribution services to suit the needs of each partner. We also offer regulatory services through a team of in-house pharmacists to follow up with registration documentation to ensure it is up to date and guide our partners accordingly.

The other stand-alone Antah company is Antah Bumimedic, which meet the criteria for Bumiputera status. Antah Bumimedic is focused on businesses from East Malaysia and also participates in tendering under the criteria where it is limited to Bumiputra companies.

Tunku Naquiyuddin (TN): Within the family group, we have started a biotech company, Entogenex, which has developed products in Malaysia against mosquito-borne diseases. Over the years, the staff have been working with an award-winning science and we received a grant from the government to commercialize it in Malaysia. The science consists in modifying a molecule in the female mosquito cell to alter their digestive system so that larvae upon consuming the peptide, would die from metabolic starvation thus controlling mosquito-borne diseases such as Dengue to spread within the population. Entogenex has further developed a product containing that molecule to be sprayed onto surfaces like roofs, gutters and trees to minimize mosquito population without polluting the environment. As it became more effective, we received another grant from the government to use our product in four states and 30 areas. It was a great success as the Ministry of Health has seen the incidence of Dengue reduced by 54.7 percent instead of the 30 percent expected in the 30 regions monitored. The next step is now to enter the EU, thanks to another grant. We are currently preparing a launch in Portugal and planning to expand this science towards the control of caterpillars which destroy plantation crops.

What makes Antah Healthcare Group unique compared to other distributors in the country?

TMA: The company was formed 57 years ago, and we have been growing year on year. This year we experienced positive growth and it is partly due to the growing population and new medical

infrastructures being built, but it is also thankful to a very strong distribution network of about 12,000 hospitals, clinics and pharmacies that we have developed over the years. Our strength has always been from the perspective of warehousing, marketing and distribution; however, we are a lot smaller compared to DKSH or Zuellig which are global companies with much more resources. As a family company, our focus is to build our business through a reliable, friendly and successful relationship with our principals and customers. Our partners can have direct access to the management in short notice and we offer a lot less bureaucracy than other companies.

TN: Ever since TMA took over the operations of Antah Healthcare Group, the company's culture has changed. To my observation, he has been focusing on talent management in order to build up value of the company to make a difference. We were focused on organic growth by limiting our investments into the company and this method allowed us to reconsider our way of doing business as we understand that multi-tasking encourages better efficiency from employees.

TMA led our staff to be able to multi-task and this skill ensures the best quality of our services and products to our clients. By converting the defined roles of our staff, 25 technicians are now capable of being in marketing and sales as well as maintenance agents.

TMA: Following this internal change, I am now looking toward the future to ensure we remain a unique player in the country. The next step I see is to expand our medical devices business into the private sector. As for Antah Pharma, we are looking to acquire more generic medication for oncology, psychotropic and diabetes markets. As everyone including the government is looking for cost efficient and effective goods, I shall be announcing equally unique business models in due course.

How do you choose your business partners and the products that will be distributed in Malaysia?

TMA: In choosing our partners, we do not look at areas where big companies have similar products but at niche products that our product specialist has identified after much analysis and market studies. As we know mostly all the pharmacies, hospitals and doctors in the country, this speeds up the process compared with other players when answering the need of the market. We are the soldier on the ground, we understand and anticipate all possible shortcomings and ensure that a needed product can be immediately distributed in the market upon approval. We also have a good working relationship with the government so as we may anticipate and fulfill requirements where necessary.

How is Antah Group participating in the discussions and reforms of the new government?

TN: The new government was voted for their progressive thinking to avoid monopolies and build an even-playing field in various sectors. Up until now they have done very well but what is causing concern in the industry is – while we are aware that change will occur, we don't know yet how reforms will be implemented. For example, the current Ministry of Health has recently launched the program “Peduli Sihat”, a special program to support healthcare expenses of the B40 group (the 40 percent poorest population in Malaysia). It is the first time that we are introduced to such a commendable program that focuses on supporting the poorer Malaysians in healthcare. However, no financial plan is established to support the program at the moment.

In this regard, we have established Axxess, one of our subsidiary companies to offer Malaysians an option of a loyalty card that provides medical benefits in the form of healthcare insurance and free hospitalization of up to RM 50,000 (USD 12,000) against loyalty points that may be collected after purchasing groceries, gas or other items from our partners. Besides driving customers to our business partners, this scheme helps to reduce healthcare bills of Malaysian citizens. This is beneficial to reduce the government's medical budget dramatically with assistance from the private sector.

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What are your main priorities for the next three years?

TMA: The name Antah is well known in Malaysia as we have always been very Malaysia-centric and as such, our goals are to expand into the ASEAN region. Locally for Antah Sri Radin we are entering into a new customer segment such as private hospitals, dentists and relevant medical institutions. We are also looking out for products for the retail market such as ECG devices, Time Machine for pain management and acquiring more consumables. As for Antah Pharma, we are looking to include wider coverage in East Malaysia and will be involved with bio-pharmaceutical technology such as stem cell treatments, media culture and finally, acquiring IPs for our own range of products including generic drugs.

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