



Bank uplifting micro entrepreneurs

Programme provides training and seed money to grow business to next level

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RHB Banking Group is targeting to uplift 500 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic through the RHB #JomBiz social empowerment programme this year.

RHB Banking Group managing director and chief executive officer Mohd Rashid Mohamad said he found that the participants were appreciative of the programme.

"We want these micro, small and medium enterprises to reach a higher level so that they can eventually become SMEs. We are continuously mentoring these participants."

"This programme is not just focused on business, it also gives importance to the mental health of the entrepreneurs," he told reporters after the RHB #JomBiz awards ceremony 2023 held at RHB Centre, Kuala Lumpur.

Out of 141 programme participants who pitched their business ideas, the top 10 winners were selected and given seed funding which could be up to RM30,000 each.

A total of 37 participants received a consolation prize of RM1,200 seed funding each.

Launched in 2022, this programme is in line with the group's sustainability strategy and road-map.

It aims to empower MSMEs through capacity building and provision of seed funding to help them re-start and boost their business.

Held in collaboration with Taylor's Community, the programme aimed to provide MSMEs in Malaysia with holistic entrepreneurship training plus business strategy and finance knowledge to power their growth.

"This programme to uplift small businesses is part of our community and CSR initiatives as well."

"We wish to support the vulnerable groups affected by the pandemic," explained Mohd Rashid.

He said they would also help upskill participants with digital capabilities and provide quality financial services through their Digital Bank to be launched by the end of this year or first quarter of next year.

RHB Group community banking managing director Jeffrey Ng Eow



The winners and participants of the RHB #JomBiz social empowerment programme posing with the RHB team and guests at the awards ceremony held at RHB Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

Oo said that RM500,000 had been allocated for the pilot programme, and that the fund would be reviewed as they wanted to make it an annual event.

Ng said that the participants of RHB #JomBiz underwent a rigorous management and business programme for about three months to get basic knowledge on "how to run a proper business".

"They got a chance to pitch their ideas on how they think they can bring their business to another level from a strategic perspective."

"The participants needed to know their target market and show what they had learnt over the last three months."

"From there, we selected the top 10 winners for this programme," Ng added.

The participants were scrutinised carefully during the selection process with the focus on the B40 group.

RHB Islamic Bank Bhd managing director and chief executive officer Datuk Adissadikin Ali said they might also look for other training partners for the programme.

"Some of the participants were referred to us by the Federal Territories Islamic Religious Council (MAIWP) because they identified the real B40 *asnaf* (underprivileged) group who wanted to be entrepreneurs to upgrade themselves."

"We want to identify those worthy participants," said Adissadikin.

In his speech at the awards ceremony, Mohd Rashid said the participants of the RHB #JomBiz pro-



(From second left) Azrina receiving her RM30,000 seed funding from Mohd Rashid. With them are RHB Bank Bhd group chief sustainability and communications officer Norazzah Sulaiman (left) and Ng.

gramme came from various backgrounds. They included single parents, homemakers and new entrepreneurs.

Azrina Non, 40, one of the programme's winners who received RM30,000 seed funding, is in the frozen food business in Bentong, Pahang.

"The RHB #JomBiz programme has exposed me to new ideas to expand my business."

"I am looking to introduce ready-to-eat meals like fried rice and noodles soon for my customers with the funds received from the bank."

"I expect to enjoy an increase of

30% in income due to my participation in this programme," said Azrina.

Siti Mariam Tarman, 43, a sushi micro entrepreneur in Taman Maluri, Cheras, said the programme helped her to think out of the box and venture into the halal industry.

"I created various mixtures (*inti*) for preparation of sushi, and set up booths at various government agencies in Putrajaya five days per week to sell these sushi variations," she added.

Mohd Fadil Ahmad Bahari, 37, who sells *nasi lemak* in Jinjang, Kepong, received RM1,200 seed

funding and said that the programme helped him to solve problems in business, and remain calm when facing challenges.

"I learned how to talk to clients and optimise social media platforms."

"I gained confidence to grow my business. Each entrepreneur has to be competitive," he said.

Tharani Periasamy, 50, who teaches crafts and tailoring, received RM5,000 seed funding.

She said the programme allowed her to help single mothers to learn new skills to earn a living while caring for their families at the same time.

"I cut the fabrics and pack them during the training sessions and the single mothers can stitch the tote bags within four hours. I also taught some of them how to stitch Punjabi suits," she shared.

"The programme is very interesting and allows me to network for my business too," said Tharani, who is now renting a space in Petaling Jaya for the business.

"Previously, I didn't know anything about pitching and financial aspects."

"This programme has helped me to communicate better using proper channels and how to go to the next level in business," she added.

The registration of the third cohort of this programme will open in March.

More announcements will be made through the RHB #JomBiz official webpage: <https://www.rhb-group.com/JomBiz/index.html>