

MAPS President Speech – 2nd Biennial Dinner 21 October 2016

Yang Berusaha Dr Salmah Bahri, Pengarah Pharmacy Regulatory Agensi Regulatori Farmasi Negara,

Yang Berusaha Encik Tan Ann Ling, Pengarah Bahagian Penguatkuasaan Farmasi,

Mr Diong Sing Peng, President of Malaysian Organisation of Pharmaceutical Industries (MOPI)

Mr Lee Eng Peng, representing President of Pharmaceutical Association of Malaysia (PhAMA)

Mr James Pereira, representing President of Malaysian Dietary Supplement Association (MADSA)

Encik Amrahi Buang, President of Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society (MPS)

Dr Koh Kar Chai representing Presiden of Malaysian Medical Association (MMA)

Pn Nik Jah, representing President of Malaysian Community Pharmacy Guild (MCPG)

and Distinguished Guests

On behalf of the Directors, members and Organising Committee of the Malaysian Association of Pharmaceutical Suppliers (MAPS) we welcome you to MAPS 2nd Biennial Dinner tonight. Although MAPS is into its 5th Year of existence, we remain a very young organisation.

For the benefit of you who have heard this before, the first gathering of “like-minded” interest Group for the formation of the “Malaysian Association of Pharmaceutical Suppliers (MAPS)” was on 17th March 2011 held in the premise of Medispec, Taman Mayang. At that time, there was a vacuum - an organisation to represent companies which import mostly generic medicines. Thus, with the blessings of the Bahagian Perkhidmatan Farmasi, the importers met on that historic date to form MAPS and we were finally registered as an Association by the Registrar of Society on the 17th November 2011.

The Pharmaceutical industry is usually touted as recession-proof. However the industry is merely insulated but not immune to the vagaries of the economy. Without going into the costs of material and procurement, it is evident that today the cost of operation has also risen drastically. There are also credit risks. Realising that there are matters beyond our control, the industry will have to manage matters within its control to remain resilient.

The theme for tonight, which also sets a direction to which MAPS would like to go, is "Together for Strength". I wish to quote 4 sayings by Solomon, reputedly, the wisest man ever. From these I have learned many truths.

1. Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work
2. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
3. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.
4. This fourth saying provides a clearer understanding of what it means by sharpening one another in saying #3. It goes like this: If the axe is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed but skill will bring success.

What I learned from these wise words, is that if the industry works together and with stakeholders, we can sustain our industry and become more efficient at what we do.

MAPS has a membership of 28, which is a rather small number. The well-known adage is "bigger is better". There are many more companies that fit the criteria to be members of MAPS who are potential members. We hope that more will eventually see the benefit of being part of MAPS and join us in working for the benefit of themselves, regulators and most importantly the general public.

We have regular formal and informal meetings among members, where we get to share issues that we face and get ideas on how to manage these issues, i.e. we sharpen one another.

Our members play a major role in ensuring access to medicines, particularly quality medicines which are affordable. It is undeniable that medicines are essential for improving the quality of patient care. In this regard, there have been recent concerns with the price of medicines in Malaysia. Our colleagues in the industry are equally concerned if our prices are uncompetitive. After all we are not only suppliers of medicines, but also consumers of such. We hope that with further engagements with the ministry, we can help to interpret some findings relevant to our market. There are differences in market structure that may contribute to such price differences.

The concept of togetherness pervades not just companies like ours. As mentioned just a while ago, we have worked with other organisations, with the ultimate goal of bringing benefit to all stakeholders.

Various ministries also seek MAPS' views in formulating policies, and we also work with other industry associations to find solutions to common industry issues.

Governance is now an increasingly emphasised matter in our society. The ministry of health has recently formulated a Good Governance for Medicines guideline for the private sector, incorporating aspects of the Good Pharmaceutical Trade Practices. It is an initiative that will lead our industry to better evidence based decision making in treatment of patients.

We are also thankful that the Ministry has given our joint industries an opportunity to present our views on our participation in a more transparent anti-counterfeiting program. This GS1 system incorporates the benefits of track and trace. We hope that the ministry will seriously consider this as a serious contender to the anti-counterfeiting measure.

On good governance and anti-counterfeiting, I think it is opportune that I inform members that next month, MAPS will be organizing a two for the price of one event. The two events will be feature GS1 system and GGM.

We are also looking at further increasing our role in the human capital aspect, with the eventual training of Provisionally Registered Pharmacists (PRP). This should increase the number of industry ready pharmacists.

We are thankful for many open discussions provided to MAPS by the NPRA. We are aligned with the NPRA's goals of providing quality, efficacious and safe medicines. We hope to have more such dialogues as we progress together to better improve the delivery of the goals that we share.

We are also thankful to the Bahagian Perkhidmatan Farmasi in engaging us on so many issues relating to the practise and development of pharmacy, National Drugs Policy, etc. Indeed, we have just been invited to the next round of Dunas Review early next month, and look forward to it.

Michael Porter said “Businesses must reconnect company success with social progress. Shared value is not social responsibility, philanthropy, or even sustainability, but a new way to achieve economic success. It is not on the margin of what companies do but at the center. We believe that it can give rise to the next major transformation of business thinking.”

Our industry partners such as Phama and MOPI have always been interesting. We exist as competitors, yet we are harmonious, as our ultimate goal is to serve the public and in so doing remain profitable. We compete while maintaining or improving the average standard of living.

MAPS has been a frequent dialogue partner with MPS in seeking to uplift the profession of pharmacy. MAPS members, being part of the supply chain ultimately connects to outlets such as clinics, hospitals and pharmacies.

We have seen the benefit of working together, such as learning to cope in these challenging times, and even when times were better. This has helped us adapt to the only constant i.e. change. It has sharpened our skills and knowledge. On top of that, though we remain competitors, we have become partners towards the common goal of better delivery of health options to the public. Though we are subject to regulations, we have managed to work with regulators to manage expectations also in delivering better value to the public.

MAPS has also made representations and engaged with other relevant Government bodies like the PEMANDU, Treasury, MyCC, MPC, etc, on issues and challenges relating to our trade. We have met foreign delegations and embassies to explore the pharmaceutical market.

The benefits of working together across all stakeholders are numerous. It would take too much time to elaborate on each and every one of them, especially when most of you are hungry for more delicious food. However, if I may, I would like to just mention two recent beneficial outcomes, while it is still fresh in our minds.

The industry is very thankful that through many appeals both from within the ministry and among practitioners and joint associations, all scheduled poisons are now GST zero-rated. It is a blessing but also comes with implementation challenges in regard to the affixing of Z code. The industry was in a bind due to the sheer number of products to be labelled and the shortness of time. This was compounded by the logistical challenge of labelling products already in the market place. However in the end we have come up with workable solution. I trust all members have already initiated steps to ensure that all zero rated items leaving the warehouse are labelled accordingly.

The second relates to the Poison stores across states. The dialogue has produced a resolution to the matter, yet not compromising on the proper documentation of storage of such poisons.

We would like to thank all the stakeholders and the members of MAPS, and would like to assure, that MAPS will continue to play a constructive role in ensuring an equitable, fair, efficient, responsible and accountable delivery of products and services to the Rakyat and Nation.

I hope that the benefits of working together are becoming more apparent and real to our members and potential members. However, while the size of the organisation is important, the participation, and of course, full participation, will help to move us forward.

Before I move to thank all who have put in effort to make this night a reality, I would like to pay tribute to our Immediate Past President, En Radzmi Rahmat. The birthing of a young organisation is not easy, and he has been instrumental in bringing MAPS from infancy to its current level. Please remember him in your prayers and we wish him strength as he continues to meet the challenges in his road to recovery.

I thank Mr Mathew John, Organising Chairman of this dinner and his small committee, as well as Dr Choe, the advisor. I would like to thank all of you for being together with us here tonight in celebrate our 2nd Biennial Dinner, as we approach our 5th Anniversary next month. The Organising Committee has prepared an evening program of entertainment, so please, sit back, relax, and enjoy.

I thank all companies that have contributed to the table gift for tonight. Many companies also contributed to the lucky draw gifts you see gifts wrapped up at that corner on this stage. I will spare you the details of what they are but don't be in a hurry to leave since the prize draws will be progressively be more valuable toward the evening

In closing, I am pleased to extend warm regards to Yang Berusaha Dr Salmah Bahri and all the guests in celebrating with us tonight.

Thank you.