

Wen Ken sees expansion in Asean region

JOHOR BARU — With a solid history spanning 80 years, the iconic Three Legs traditional self-medication brand is growing from strength-to-strength as it remains relevant to current consumer needs.

The brand is well known in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia and Hong Kong for its four main products — cough mixture, medicinal powder, flea fungal solution and the popular cooling water.

At the same time, the Three Legs brand, owned by the Wen Ken Group, will also be making a leap into new markets in Indochina (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) in its regional expansion plans.

"We feel that most of our products can be marketable in the Indochina market based on suitability."

"There is potential in those countries and that will be the group's next (expansion) plan," said Wen Ken Group director Fu Shou Jeen during the company's 80th anniversary celebrations at its factory here in Taman Johor yesterday.

Also present at the celebrations was Wen Ken Group managing director Fu Slang Jeen.

Shou Jeen said the company has survived more than eight decades as it believes in its core products that have benefitted consumers since 1937.

He said Wen Ken was still very much a family-owned business as it is all about maintaining the legacy, even as it adapts to a more modern management style.

"We are now the third generation from the founding Fu family that are currently managing the pharmaceutical company."

"And our business mantra has always been prioritising safety and efficacy in our products. The former means the product must be safe for consumption or use, while the latter means it has to



Shou Jeen (left) and Slang Jeen with a selection of Wen Ken products. The company has been in business since 1937. — Pictures courtesy of Wen Ken Group

deliver on the function it promises," explained Shou Jeen.

Shou Jeen also revealed that the company will soon be expanding its product line on their popular bestselling Three Legs cooling water in Malaysia.

At present, the well-known cooling water comes in the traditional 200ml bottle and also an ultra modern 350ml bottle called Cool Rhino. The Cool Rhino, introduced to the market several years ago, is essentially the same product but re-branded in order to appeal to a younger target market.

Shou Jeen said by the second quarter

next year, the company will launch flavoured cooling water and add varieties with lower-sugar content to cater to new segments.

"Singapore has already launched the flavoured cooling water in Lime, Lychee and Guava. For Malaysia, we are looking at introducing two flavours first," he said, adding that they are still doing consumer market research for the feasibility.

For Slang Jeen, he sees the current consumer attitudes towards the Three Leg

brand products as an important aspect.

"As brand owners, we also need to change in order to stay relevant to current consumers through modern packaging, expansion of product lines and also demand," he said.

Slang Jeen said whatever changes instituted usually has to do with improving a product's ease of use for the consumer, typically involving packaging.

"A good example is our Three Legs Pe Pa Kao honey-based throat soother, which used to come in a regular bottle but now incorporates a dripper cap, with an anti-drip cap to prevent unwanted stickiness from the syrup."

"As times change, so will consumer attitudes towards products, and we need to meet these challenges to go forward," the managing director said.

Slang Jeen also explained that the current crop of younger consumers are very into their own wellbeing these days and believe more in prevention than cure.

Thus, he said the company's new products, and also product expansions, will focus on this, which is different from the past where the brand and its products were known as an over-the-counter product for symptomatic relief to an ailment.

Currently, Wen Ken's products are manufactured at its 40,000 sq ft plant in Johor and in Indonesia, which is operated by a local business partner.

The Wen Ken Group has an annual global sales revenue exceeding RM430 million.



Cool Rhino was introduced to appeal to a younger consumer market.

