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Press Release

Hong Leong Bank awarded Best SME Bank in Malaysia at The Asian Banker International Excellence in Retail Financial Services Awards 2019

- **Integrating digital initiatives to create a more frictionless experience for Small and Middle Entrepreneurs (SMEs)**
- **Displayed strong growth in acquiring SMEs**
- **Launched efficient tools for SMEs to enhance their business performance**

Dubai, March 21st, 2019 — Hong Leong Bank was awarded **Best SME Bank in Malaysia** at **The Asian Banker International Excellence in Retail Financial Awards 2019**. The awards ceremony was held in conjunction with The Excellence in Retail Financial Services Convention 2019 at Conrad Dubai, U.A.E on March 21st, 2019.



In the picture: John Holder, Chief Technologist, Realities Centre; Members of the International Advisory Council of Excellence in Retail Financial Services Awards Programme; Wilson Chia and Richard Hartung; Spiros Margaritis, Founder, Margaritis Ventures; Terence Teoh, Head, Group SME Banking, Hong Leong Bank, Malaysia

Integrating digital initiatives to create a more frictionless experience for Small and Medium Entrepreneurs (SMEs)

To create a more frictionless process for SMEs, Hong Leong Bank has implemented Digital Client Onboarding to increase the ease of opening Business Current Accounts. Through this system, SME customers will be able to easily submit the relevant details via the Hong Leong Bank website to open a current account and all it takes is for an authorised signatory to submit copies of their Identity Card, M&A and Board Resolution to any of the bank's branches. This has reduced the time spent by SME customers from about 359 minutes to 90 minutes. Furthermore, with the launch of the mobile features: Hong Leong Connect and Connect First, SME customers will also be able to track their cash flows conveniently and also earn monthly rebates of up to MYR120 simply by maintaining a minimum average balance of MYR15,000. SME customers will also enjoy a full range of online payment services to make payments to their suppliers, employees and even to pay their bills. These help SMEs to speed up their business processes and also increase the ease of conducting transactions.

Displayed strong growth in acquiring SMEs

Hong Leong bank has emerged as a strong performer with the fastest growth in acquiring new SME accounts between December 2017 and November 2018. The banks' flagship accounts for small and medium enterprises saw an annual new account growth of 259%. Hong Leong Bank was able to keep such impressive numbers because of its initiatives to understand the needs of SMEs in Malaysia through data collected from customer focus groups and various surveys and reports that provided insightful information. Through these initiatives, the bank was able to provide holistic banking solutions that satisfied the needs of SMEs and hence secured the trust of its customers.

Launched efficient tools for SMEs to enhance their business performance

Following the detailed surveys and data collection to understand the needs of SMEs in Malaysia, Hong Leong Bank launched the SMELITE financing program and HLB Digital Business Solution for SMEs. This combination provides SMEs with property and working capital financing, an online business banking platform financing of insurance premiums, pre-approved hire purchase loans a suite of free digital business solutions to help SME owners enhance their business performances with the assistance of one single source. By combining the property and working capital loans, SMEs are offered a 150% margin of advance that is guaranteed by the Credit Guarantee Corporation Malaysia. The tools that are provided include Digital Accounting, Digital Payroll and HR, Digital Advertising, and Digital Tax Advisory. Specifically, Digital Advertising enables SME customers to advertise at a heavily discounted rate, almost 20 times lower than the market rate, with over 3,500 digital screens across various platforms such as airports, shopping malls, convenience stores offices and hotels, enabling them to greatly increase their exposure to the public.

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The International Excellence in Retail Financial Services programme is one of the most rigorous, prestigious and transparent awards programme for consumer financial services in the world. Covering all of the Asia Pacific, the Middle East and West Africa, the programme was instituted in 2001 to recognise the pursuit of excellence amongst retail financial institutions. The programme evaluates more than 300 banks and non-bank retail financial services players in more than 42 countries, via a rigorous audit-based approach. Detailed evaluation criteria for each category may be found at <http://awards.asianbankerforums.com/retailfinancial/criteria-country>

About The Asian Banker International

The Asian Banker is the region's most authoritative provider of strategic business intelligence to the financial services community. The Singapore-based company has offices in Singapore, Malaysia, Manila, Hong Kong, Beijing, and Dubai, as well as representatives in London, New York, and San Francisco. It has a business model that revolves around three core business lines: publications, research services and forums. The company's website is www.theasianbanker.com

You may visit the Excellence in Retail Financial Services Awards gallery at https://www.facebook.com/pg/TheAsianBanker/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10157080239284804

For further information on the collaterals for winning banks, please contact:

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