

MALAYSIA'S TOP 40 RICHEST PEOPLE

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LAST year was dotted by the return of higher commodity prices and better economic growth. The world's economies on average are back in business as growth rates and trade have started to improve once again after some period of uncertainty caused by a cooling China economy and also the slump in global crude oil prices.

That translated to indeed a stellar year for Malaysia's richest people. The top 40 richest Malaysians saw their net worth increase by a combined RM63.62bil or 28% to RM290.48bil at the end of 2017.

That amount though is limited to the value of listed shares the 40 individuals own and do not take into account the debt taken to buy the

shares and the information gathered is based on latest disclosures made by those companies as at the end of last year.

Among the richest 40, the person who saw the largest increase in wealth was Robert Kuok. Malaysia's richest man who saw a RM13.17bil increase in his wealth and that was followed by Press Metal Aluminium Holdings Bhd founder Tan Sri Koon Poh Keong and Koon Poh Ming, who is his brother.

The rebound in aluminium prices and the great improvement in the financial performance of Press Metal led to a huge rise in wealth for Poh Keong and Poh Ming, and subsequently their ranking from the 14th spot to eighth this year.

This year also saw the entry of seven new people into the list, led by Tan Sri Tony Fernandes and Datuk Kamarudin Meranun of the AirAsia Group. The big jump in the share price of AirAsia as the profits of the company soared amid an internal restructuring of the group saw them catapult into the 17th position with a combined wealth of RM3.9Sbil.

Other notable entries into the list with wealth in excess of RM2bil are Datuk Mohd Abdul Karim Abdullah, Abdul Kadier Sahib and Datuk Awang Daud Awang Putera of Serba Dinamik Holdings Bhd (RM2.Sbil) and fund manager Datuk Seri Cheah Cheng Hye (RM2.47bil) of Value Partners Group.

But with every entry into the list, there is an equal number of individuals who have dropped out of the top 40. Tan Sri Shahril Shamsuddin of Saoura Energy Bhd was ranked the 29th richest person in Malaysia in 2016 but the collapse in crude oil prices and also the share price of his listed company saw him lose more than half of the value of his shares in the company.

The drop in the share price of Sapura Energy erased RM9S8mil in the value of Shahril's shares in the company.

Other notable people who have dropped out of the top 40 are Rimbunan Hijau boss Tan Sri Diong Hiew King@ Tiong Hiew King and Tan Sri Mokhzani Mahathir after he sold his listed shares in Sapura Energy.

18 TAN SRI LIM WEE CHA

Flagship: Top Glove Coro Bhd Net worth:RM3.79bil

WITH a 53% higher net worth, Lim has moved up two notches on the list of 40 richest Malaysians in 2017.

His wealth is pretty straightforward and lean. It is through a 36.4% shareholding in Top Glove that Lim owns most of his wealth, as the company is the world's largest manufacturer and distributor of rubber gloves.

Apart from that, he also owns a 10.3% stake in Tropicana Corp Bhd which is primarily involved in property development.

From just one factory and three production lines during its inception in 1991, Top Glove has now captured

2S% of the world market share and offers a diverse product range, which targets both the healthcare and non healthcare segments.

Currently, the glovemaker serves a network of over 2,000 customers in more than 195 countries.

Last year, the stock had a good run, particularly in the second half of the year as it rose by SS% in 2017. Its market capitalisation stood at RM10 bil as at Dec 31, 2017.

Following a long period of speculation in the corporate grapevine, Top Glove announced a few months ago that it would be acquiring Aspion Sdn Bhd from Adventa Capital Pte Ltd via a combination of borrowings

and new shares.

The proposed deal also comes with Adventa providing a profit after tax guarantee of RM80mil for the financial year ending 2018, translating into a price-to-earnings multiple of 16 to 18 times.

The move to acquire Aspion, worth at least RM1.3bil, is said to be one of the biggest investments Top Glove has made since its initial public offering 17 years ago.

Post-acquisition of Aspion, Top Glove aims to position itself as a global leader in surgical glove manufacturing.

Being an export-reliant entity, the volatility in the global currencies, especially the ringgit and the US dollar, has a big influence on Top Glove. The weak ringgit in the past two years has been a boon for Top Glove, as its revenue is predominantly in US dollars terms.

However, with the ringgit gradually strengthening and breaching the RM3.90 per US dollar mark, concerns emerge on whether currency volatility will affect Top Glove, moving forward.

Lim has reportedly said that the strong ringgit is a boon, as it allows the company to proceed with its plans to further expand its production lines, as well as to go for mergers and acquisitions.

Bernama has reported that Top Glove is aiming to acquire between six and seven more companies, moving forward.

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