

## **TAPPING INTO THE WORLD *HALAL* MARKET: SOME DISCUSSIONS ON MALAYSIAN LAWS AND STANDARDS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Recently, the HDC or Halal Development Corporation took over the administration of halal from JAKIM (Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia) to establish a specific body that is fully in charge of the halal administration. This appears to be one of the initiatives the government has implemented to raise Malaysia's standing as a major player in the world halal industry. In its implementation there must also be laws imposing criminal liability on the violation of halal, as well as particular standards for its achievement. This article discusses the laws that impose criminal liability as well as the Malaysian Halal Standard to determine whether Malaysia can position itself as the 'model' country for taking charge of halal matters globally.*

**Keywords:** *world halal hub, laws imposing criminal liability, Malaysian Halal Standard*

### **INTRODUCTION**

It must first be stated that the Islamic dietary and consumption system is different and unique compared to other ethnic dietary systems. The world community

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has now begun to understand the importance of the Muslims requirement for food and other consumption known as *halal*.<sup>1</sup> The market for certified *halal* food and products is growing robustly, both domestically and internationally.<sup>2</sup>

Although the term *halal* has never attracted as much attention as in recent times, today, wherever there are Muslim consumers whose tastes and preferences are governed by *halal* rules on food specification, a *halal* food market exists. Every Muslim must ensure that what they eat comes from a *halal* source. This does not mean only to check the ingredients *per se*, but also to ensure that the whole process is in accordance with Shariah principles.

As Muslims constitute the largest population in Malaysia it has given them many advantages. However, being cheated concerning non-*halal* and *halal*, as in labelling non-*halal* as *halal* has raised the sensitivity of many Muslims in this country. It is not easy to investigate for oneself as many Muslims buy food that has already been packaged. Because of the difficulty in determining the *halal* status, Muslims depend on the responsible authority to check the status on their behalf. However, as the requirement for a *halal* certificate in Malaysia is voluntary with few being legally labelled as *halal*, there is a level of ambivalence.

## **THE HALAL CONCEPT**

By definition, *halal* consists of anything that is free from any component that Muslims are prohibited from consuming. In this era of technology, the concept of *halal* can no longer be restricted to simply meaning food that is 'pork free' in its physical existence. It covers a multitude of forms such as emulsifiers and other food substances such as gelatine, enzymes, lecithin, and glycerine as well as additives such as stabilizers, flavouring, colouring, breadcrumbs etc. In recent developments in food technology, the one that has been given the most attention is genetically-modified food or GM food.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Hidayat Buang and Zalina Zakaria (2004), "Some Assessments on the Adequacy of Regulatory and Supervisory Framework", A paper presented at the International Seminar on Halal Food and Products: Challenges and Prospects in the Global Market, held on the 28-29 Sept 2004, Marriott Putrajaya, Malaysia.

<sup>2</sup> Sharifuddin Shaarani (2004), "Halal and Haram in Food", UMS accessed at <http://www.ums.edu.my.ssmp.ehalal.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Shaikh Mohd Saifudddeen Shaikh Mohd Salleh (2002), "Understanding Genetically Modified Food", accessed at <http://www.ikim.gov.my.v5/print.php?grp=2&key=359>

As a matter of fact, the sources of food may come from a *halal* animal that has been slaughtered according to Islamic rites. The Quran, as the ultimate source of every *hukm* has stressed this issue, to the effect that:

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ كُلُّوْا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا

“O ye people! Eat what is on earth, lawful (*halal*) and good (*ṭayyib*)...”

(Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:168)

From this verse, it is understood that Islam sets two essential criteria for food consumption, namely, *halal* (permissible by the Shariah) and *ṭayyib* (of good quality).

Further in the Quran in the same *sūrah*, it has been mentioned that:

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُلُّوْا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَأَشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١٧٣﴾ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ فَمَنْ أَضْطَرَّ غَيْرَ بَآغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٧٤﴾

“O you who believe! Eat of the good things that we have provided to you, and be grateful to God, if it is He ye worship. He hath only forbidden you dead meat, and blood, and the flesh of swine and that on which any other name hath been invoked besides that of God.”

(Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:172-173)

It is clear from the above *ayat* that eating food that is *halal* and the avoidance of what has already been forbidden, *ḥarām*, is an obligation to every Muslim. It is understood that each and every *hukm* laid down in the Quran has its own reasoning and must not be taken for granted.

## MALAYSIA AND HALAL RECOGNITION

It can be seen that Malaysia is becoming globally recognized as the world’s *halal* hub. Despite being a multi-religious and multiracial country, making the country’s *halal* industry a role model for other countries is a very ambitious aim. In accomplishing the noted purpose, Malaysia is striving to achieve the goal. This can be evidenced through the annual budget announced every year,

which allocates a certain budget for the development of *halal*. This shows that the government has provided incentives to specifically prepare for and accommodate this aim.

It is true that in a multiracial Muslim country like Malaysia, *halal* food and products as well as services<sup>4</sup> are readily available and easy to obtain. Nevertheless, there is also a need for the authority to monitor and enforce standards to ensure the genuineness of *halal*, particularly when the products or services are made, sold, prepared or provided by non-Muslims.

### **Duty of Consumer**

Having mentioned that there is an authoritative body to check and monitor the *halal* status, it is the inherent duty of every Muslim to ensure that what they eat and consume comes from *halal* sources. They must also check whether the ingredients used are *halal*. In addition, they must also establish that the whole preparation process that was undergone is not contrary to Shariah.

In fact, observations must be made of the food premises, the way food is kept, stored, the water used and even the container used must be clean. Although it is acknowledged that most Muslims are aware of the facts few consider or sometimes even take for granted other products such as cosmetics, clothing, premises, and water without giving the same attention as they would for food products.

Occasionally, due to the complexity of tracing the source of various ingredients of which a food or drink or other goods for consumption are made from, many Muslim consumers rely on the ingredients on the outer packaging to facilitate them in selecting *halal* items. Given that there are so many products available on the market nowadays, the issue becomes more complicated when many ingredients are written in their scientific nomenclature. Especially, as not all consumers understand the scientific terms, and worse still is the lack of understanding concerning the codes used.

Besides being taught to be aware that food and goods for consumption should be *halal*, another important element for Muslims to be aware of pertains to the quality. This particular aspect has also been emphasized by the Prophet Muhammad in many of his traditions (*hadīths*). The guidelines provided by the Prophet show that Islam puts great emphasis on the quality of food (*tayyib*) consumed by its believers. At this juncture, Islam recommends Muslims to

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<sup>4</sup> *Halal* services include many other services such as banking services, insurance or even daily transactions.

keep away from “*Shubhah*”<sup>5</sup> to guard oneself from committing actual *ḥarām*.

This principle originates from the following tradition of the Prophet, peace be upon him:

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو نُعَيْمٍ حَدَّثَنَا زَكَرِيَّا عَنْ عَامِرٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ النُّعْمَانَ بْنَ بَشِيرٍ يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - يَقُولُ الْحَالِلُ بَيْنَ وَالْحَرَامِ بَيْنٌ، وَبَيْنَهُمَا مُشَبَّهَاتٌ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ، فَمَنْ اتَّقَى الْمُشَبَّهَاتِ اسْتَبْرَأَ لِدِينِهِ وَعِرْضِهِ، وَمَنْ وَقَعَ فِي الشُّبُهَاتِ كَرَاعَ يَرْعَى حَوْلَ الْحِمَى، يُوشِكُ أَنْ يُوَاقِعَهُ. أَلَا وَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ مَلِكٍ حِمَى، أَلَا إِنَّ حِمَى اللَّهِ فِي أَرْضِهِ مَحْرَمُهُ، أَلَا وَإِنَّ فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً إِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ، وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ، أَلَا وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ

*“What is Halal is clear and what is Ḥarām is clear. Midway between them there are things which many people do not know whether they are Halal or Ḥarām. He who keeps away from them will protect his religion and will be saved. He who approaches them will be very near to Ḥarām, like a herdsman wandering near Hima (the place set by the king to be used by his cattle only), who could soon fall into this protected area. Surely for every king there is such a protected area and God's is what He declared forbidden”.*<sup>6</sup>

The Prophet has stressed that it is very important to pay serious attention to matters concerning *halal* and *ḥarām*, and that one must try to avoid any food or drink which lies within the grey area and does not fall clearly under the *halal* or non *halal* category.

<sup>5</sup> *Shubhah* literally means ‘suspected’. Some items are suspected because a person may not know whether the food or products are *halal* or *ḥarām*. If there is no written statement in the Quran and *Ḥadīth* about a matter being *halal* or *ḥarām*, then a person tries his best to make his own judgment or decision. When such a decision is based on the application or on the understanding of the original statement, one may be led to a degree of suspicion. For further elaboration, refer to Ahmad H. Sakr (1993), *A Muslim Guide to Food Ingredients*, 6th edition, Illinois: Foundation for The Islamic Knowledge.

<sup>6</sup> Muhammad bin Ismail al-Bukhārī (2000), *Mawsū'ah al-Ḥadīth al-Sharīf al-Kutub al-Sittah*, Kitāb al-Īmān, Bāb Faḍl Man Istabraa li Dīnih, hadith no. 52. Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, p. 6.

## **ISSUES PLAGUING MUSLIMS IN MALAYSIA RELATING TO HALAL**

Generally, Muslims consider the food and products that bear the *halal* label/sign as fit for consumption according to Islam and prepared in compliance with Islamic rules and guidelines. This ambivalence regarding some of the latest issues, especially those concerning the illegitimate and unlawful use of the *halal* logo or certificate impinges on the sensitivity of Muslim consumers in Malaysia.

These matters affected Muslims in Malaysia and, as a result, many hesitate to buy or have doubt in selecting food and other goods for their consumption. Other issues, including chickens that have not been properly slaughtered according to Islamic rites, the use of ingredients contaminated with non-*halal* items have become a nightmare to many Muslims, although it is acknowledged that some do not even bother.

These are not the first occurrences of such incidents happening. Many Muslim consumers have felt threatened by such cases, even if, as some people suggest, the mass media has exaggerated their reports about these issues. As the trust of Muslims in any *halal* mark is implicit, such cases are considered as a breach of trust. However, whether the media reports are considered alarmist or not they actually help Muslim consumers become more cautious. At least once apprised of the situation they will be more alert to the possibility and be more meticulous in their enquiries before buying anything to consume.

Again, as mentioned earlier, it is not easy to check on food or other goods when they are bought from the market, especially when it concerns pre-packaged items or processed food. It can be seen that the current practice of many manufacturers, distributors and operators of premises is to put a *halal* label, sign or mark on various foods, products and premises. The *Halal* logo or label is put on packages, cans, bottles, wrappers of food and products; whereas operators of premises normally put a *halal* label/logo at the entrance.

Normally the *halal* status is put/written using the term '*halal*', certified *halal* (*Ditanggung Halal*), Food for Muslims (*Makanan Orang Islam*) etc. Even for certain business premises (as normally seen in *mamak* restaurants) the *halal* status is perceived through the practice of exhibiting or displaying calligraphic engravings of Quranic verses or '*Allah*' and '*Muhammad*'. To

some extent, Muslim consumers always presume that the food and products are *halal* when Muslims sell them, especially if the vendor is wearing the well-known headgear of a Muslim such as a *songkok* or *kopiah*.<sup>7</sup>

With so many products on the market the issue that has drawn much attention is that the market of *halal* food and products in Malaysia is monopolized by non-Muslims. Furthermore, of increasing concern is the emerging understanding of the actual concept of *halal*. Although some manufacturers do understand the actual concept it is obvious that there are also those who do not. In such cases, therefore, they tend to put a *halal* label or sign on the products they sell/manufacture with a view to gaining the confidence of the Muslim consumers and the Muslim community generally.

Before the HDC took over the responsibility, a full-fledged government department known as Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia or the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia with its acronym JAKIM was the sole issuer of the *halal* logo in Malaysia.<sup>8</sup> JAKIM was also entrusted with the responsibility for ascertaining the *halal* status of foreign manufacturing and processing plants intending to export their *halal* products to Malaysia. Accordingly, JAKIM is involved in an official site inspection as well as an examination of how the *halal* status is maintained and monitored.

The main function of the *halal* label/logo is to facilitate the selection of products by Muslim consumers without doubt or hesitation. It started with the government of Malaysia establishing a committee under the Islamic Affairs Division in the Prime Minister's Department in 1982 to evaluate food, drink, and goods utilized by Muslims. The *Halal* Committee functioned immediately after its establishment by conducting regular spot checks on food service establishments, hotels, restaurants, as well as food processing facilities and was, therefore, responsible for ensuring the authenticity and accuracy of the certification.

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<sup>7</sup> Dina Imam Supaat, Abidah Ab. Ghafar and Nik Salida Suhaila (2004), "Unlawful Use of Halal Sign, Mark, Label on Malaysian Food and Products: The Provision and Enforcement Action", a Paper presented at the International Seminar on Halal Food and Products: Challenges and Prospects in the Global Market, held from the 28-30 Sept 2004, at Marriott Putrajaya.

<sup>8</sup> It is, however, not known whether the *halal* certification is fully handled by JAKIM as some states are still issuing *halal* logos and certificates even though the directive was issued to the effect that JAKIM is the sole issuer. This has created confusion to potential *halal* applicants as to who they can apply for *halal* certification.

It was considered timely, as at that time Muslim consumers had no means or time to check or obtain the necessary information on the products to satisfy their conscience when making a purchase. Particularly, as they always perceive that the logo is the one thing they can rely on in determining the *halal* status of a product.

In short, as the authorities are responsible for *halal* certification in this country, Muslim consumers typically purchase goods and food that have the word *halal* on the package, or at the entrance of the food premises as, generally, they feel comfortable and rely heavily on the *halal* label, sign or mark in making the decision to buy.

### **Laws Imposing Criminal Liability That Can Relate To *Halal***

Malaysia has several statutes in operation that deal with specific activities that directly affect the consumers. The primary purpose of these laws is to ensure that a certain standard of goods is available for the consumers. It is also to protect consumers from buying goods under false or misleading information concerning the quality, standard, fitness for use and genuineness. The said Act is the Trade Descriptions Act 1972<sup>9</sup> and two Regulations made thereunder, namely, the Trade Descriptions (Use of *Halal* Expression) Order 1975 and Trade Descriptions (Marking of Food) Order 1975.

What can be inferred from the Act is that it relates to the merchandizing of marks, which is intended to prohibit the false description of goods provided in the course of trade or misleading indications as to the price of goods. In other words, it prohibits the use of misleading statements or descriptions in respect of any goods.

The aim of this statute is to protect the buyer or consumer from buying goods and services where the information concerning the genuineness or quality of the goods and services is found to be misleading. For example, a false statement is made when the ingredients listed on the wrapper or packaging differ from the actual ingredients used.

Section 3 of the Trade Descriptions (Use of *Halal* Expression) Order 1975, which comes under the Trade Descriptions Act, is regarded as the first attempt to define *halal*;

- 1) *Neither is nor consists of or contains any part or matter of any animal that a Muslim is prohibited by *hukm syarak* to consume or that has not been slaughtered in accordance with *hukm syarak*.*

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<sup>9</sup> Act 577.

- 2) *Does not contain anything which is considered to be impure according to hukum syarak.*
- 3) *Has not been prepared, processed or manufactured using any instrument that was not free from anything impure according to hukum syarak.*
- 4) *Has not in the course of preparation, processing or storage been in contact or close proximity to any food that fails to satisfy paragraphs (a), (b), (c) or anything that is considered to be impure according to hukum syarak.*

Having examined the section, it should be stressed that it does not make it an obligation for the food to be marked as *halal*. It only specifies that once the food is marked as *halal* then the trader or the manufacturer/producer of the food is responsible to ensure that the food really is '*halal*'. Consequently, if one produces/manufactures food and does not apply for *halal* certification or use any *halal* label/mark it is not considered a violation of the Section.

It also clearly indicates that the meaning of *halal* is not restricted to the matter of an animal prohibited by Shariah or not slaughtered according to Islamic rites, but to the whole process of preparing the food, which must also follow the specific criterion and the strict guidelines prescribed in the above rules.<sup>10</sup>

The Trade Descriptions (Marking of Food) Order 1975 is made in the exercise of power conferred to it by Section 11 of the Trade Descriptions Act 1972, whereby it is stated that amongst others it relates to all uncooked meat or offal, including that of poultry, which is *halal* according to the Trade Descriptions Act, and that it shall not be supplied unless it is marked by a label, tag, or any other form of mark indicating that such meat or offal had or had not been chilled or frozen.<sup>11</sup> This provision has made the *halal* marking compulsory on the food specified, and supposedly as implied from the provision, non-*halal* food then should not be labelled as *halal*. This provision, however, is only administrative in nature.<sup>12</sup>

Other than the provision under the Trade Descriptions Act mentioned earlier, the Food Act 1983<sup>13</sup> stipulates that it is an offence for any person to prepare, pack, label or sell any food in any false, misleading or deceptive

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<sup>10</sup> Ahmad Hidayat Buang and Zalina Zakaria (2004), *op.cit.*

<sup>11</sup> Dina Imam Supaat, Abidah Ab. Ghafar and Nik Salida Suhaila (2004), *op.cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Ahmad Hidayat Buang and Zalina Zakaria (2004), *op.cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Act 281.

manner as to its character, nature, value, substance, quality, composition, merit or safety strength, purity, weight, age, origin, and proportion. Here, the Act does not specifically mention any abuse or illegal use of *halal*. This Act does, however, concern the misleading or deceptive acts in which a product is marked as '*halal*' when it is not. Nevertheless, until today, no *halal* violation has been upheld under this Act. In addition, there is a regulation made under this Act, namely, the Food Regulations 1985<sup>14</sup> that makes it compulsory for food containing beef, pork or its derivatives, or lard to be clearly labelled of such ingredients.

The next piece of law relating to the labelling of food and thereby deemed to uphold *halal* is contained in section 8 of the Consumer Protection Act 1999.<sup>15</sup> It specifies that any act that is capable of leading the consumers into error, such as using false, misleading or deceptive information in relation to a product, presentation or practice is prohibited. A false statement inducing the consumer into believing that the goods are of particular kind, standard, quality, grade, quantity, style or model or that the goods are under any sponsorship, endorsement approval, performance, characteristics, accessories user or benefit is prohibited.

Another law concerning *halal* is the Animal Rules 1962,<sup>16</sup> which provides for the control of the slaughtering of animals. It empowers the Veterinary Department to issue a slaughtering certificate/licence to abattoirs or individuals with a view to ensuring that the intended animal to be slaughtered is healthy and free from any diseases. It is quite obvious that Muslim societies in Malaysia do rely and depend on such a guide in making their decision to buy or to consume products for their daily consumption. It must be reiterated that the main objective of putting a *halal* label is to facilitate Muslim consumers to select food or other products for their consumption without any fear that the food/goods might come from prohibited sources. This is important as when consumers become more religious or '*halal*-conscious' they will look for products that not only satisfy their needs but also gives them 'piece of mind'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Latest Amendment 2005 gazetted 29 September 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Act 599.

<sup>16</sup> The subsidiary laws under Animal Ordinance 1953.

<sup>17</sup> Shahidan Shafie and Md Noor Othman (2006), "Halal Certification: An International Marketing Issues and Challenges", Proceeding at the International IFSAM VIIIth World Congress, held from 28-30 Sept 2006 at Berlin Germany.

It is also to be stated here that the laws leave *lacunae* in the sense that the entire proviso is deemed to be insufficient to govern all matters relating to the violation of *halal*. It seems that the law at present is only to facilitate local or global food trade in Malaysia, which reflects the inadequacy in helping some Muslims gain trust.

### **Malaysian *Halal* Standard**

The current Malaysian Standard, MS 1500 “General Guidelines on the Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage of *Halal* Food” prescribes the practical guidelines for the food industry on the preparation and handling of *halal* food – a basic requirement for food products and food trade or business in Malaysia. Implemented together with related standards – MS 1480 and MS 1514 – on food safety and food hygiene they are, to a certain extent, regarded as the guarantee that the food consumed is not only safe but *halal*.

It is noted that nowadays, *halal* products are gaining wider recognition as a new benchmark for safety and quality assurance, including in the west. Beforehand, the west only knew *kosher*<sup>18</sup> food. The growing number of *halal* fast food restaurants in many western countries shows a reverse in attitudes that many are unaware of. This suggests that the West is catering to the needs of Muslims better than ever before.

Apparently products that are produced with *halal* certification are readily acceptable by Muslim consumers as well as consumers from other religions. This acceptance is due to the overall concept of *halal*, which covers not only the Shariah requirement, but also the hygiene, sanitation and safety aspects.

Nevertheless, a question remains: How do Muslim manufacturers in Malaysia react to the standard? Most do not bother applying for any *halal* standard or certification as they are content with the perception that food produced by Muslims<sup>19</sup> is automatically *halal*.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Kosher* is food that meets Jewish dietary laws, or *kashrut*, which comes from the Hebrew word for “fit” or “proper”. Any food can be called *kosher* food if it adheres to Jewish law, or *halacha*.

<sup>19</sup> This perception might be the reason why there are still many establishments owned by Muslims that do not apply for *halal* certification.

<sup>20</sup> This particular scenario is portrayed in the JAKIM’s *halal* guidebook and also in a publication by KasehDia, a local communication arts company, on *halal* food and beverage outlets. It is concluded that more than 90 per cent of the companies listed in the publications are either multi-nationals or non-Muslim owned.

Another issue worth pointing out is the probability of Muslim companies or Small and Medium Industries (SMI) willing to invest some capital to abide by the MS1500:2004.<sup>21</sup> Some of the companies are not willing to do so as even if they do not apply for *halal* certification, people still come and buy from them.

The established perception of *halal* food should be altered as *halal* not only covers the rituals of Muslim norm such as animal slaughtering, but also encompasses all aspects of cleanliness, safety, preparation, storage and purification. Other features, aside from these, which have been translated to form the MS1500:2004 standard, are called *tayyibah* (wholesome aspects). If Muslim manufacturers remain stationary in their traditional tide, they will be slowly engulfed by the globalization wave.

Quality aspects are essential in the open market. Muslim manufacturers must take advantage of the reputation and credibility of the Malaysian *halal* logo, which has received worldwide acknowledgement and recognition.

Another interesting development on *halal*, is that on the 17 April 2008 the Malaysian government mandated a Government Linked Company, namely, the Halal Development Corporation, (HDC) to take over the responsibility from the Halal Hub Unit under JAKIM as the *halal* coordinator.<sup>22</sup>

The reason being is that the government wanted to establish a specific body to be fully in charge of the *halal* administration. It is also the government's intention to not only look at *halal* from the eyes of religion *per se*, but to also elevate Malaysia as a major player in the world *halal* industry. However, it would appear that many are unaware of this development, perhaps as it is still new. In order to 'introduce itself' more widely, the HDC has organized many road shows.

The pivotal point that needs to be highlighted is that even though the taking over has taken place, most of the procedures such as the application process, the administration of the applications, the monitoring system still remain the same.<sup>23</sup> In actual fact, it is just a 'rebranding', done to smoothen the

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<sup>21</sup> Zulkiffi Mohamad (2004), "Going for Halal Standard", in *The Halal Journal*, accessed online on the 12 July 2008 from <http://www.halaljournal.com/article/195/going-for-halal-standard>.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Puan Norhaizam Mohd Sani, Manager of International Training of Halal Integrity and Encik Saiful Bahli, Manager, Training of Halal Integrity dated 9 July 2008, 3.00 p.m. at the Halal Development Corporation Office, Petaling Jaya.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

administration of *halal* and to make it more systematic. In consequence, it is hoped that Malaysia can promote itself as the ‘model’ country in taking charge of *halal* matters globally.

## CONCLUSION

For most Muslims, it can be said that the concept and understanding of *halal* is very clear and that *halal* food is given the highest attention by Muslims in general as it is regarded as a sensitive issue. Many issues on *halal* have been addressed, some of which are a cause of sensitivity among Muslims. It is already known that only a small percentage of the *halal* manufacturers are Muslims.

Given the speed of trade globalization, the advancement in science and technology, the continuous change in products’ formulation, and the ongoing initiatives to simplify manufacturing processes, it is essential that the *halal* concept be fully understood, especially by the marketers of consumer goods be it for food or non-food product categories.<sup>24</sup>

From the discussion above, it is a well established fact that Malaysia is doing its best to promote itself into becoming a major player in the *halal* industry. The taking over of the *halal* administration from JAKIM by the HDC is seen as a positive change in order to place *halal* matters fully under one central agency. Not only is it hoped that it will smoothen the structure, but also to advance Malaysia as a role model to other countries wishing to join the link.

Other than the change in administration, Malaysia also has several statutes in operation, in particular with regards to laws imposing criminal liability on the violation of *halal*. In fact, the Malaysian laws and regulations on this matter are regarded as the most stringent in the world. In addition, the Malaysian Halal Standard MS 1500 has been adopted by several OIC members.

Since the average global *halal* food trade is estimated at RM600 billion per year, there is tremendous potential in the development and production of *halal* products and greater efforts must be made to gain and expand the market. Many countries view Malaysia as a comprehensive increment for value as well as a certification centre; therefore making Malaysia ready to materialize it.

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

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