REMOVE OBSTACLES TO ENCOURAGE INVESTMENT: TOP GLOVE FOUNDER

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The founder of the world's largest rubber glove manufacturer started selling his rubber gloves by driving around the United States convincing potential customers and gaining their trust.

Today, Top Glove's resounding success is attributed to Tan Sri Dr Lim Wee Chai, 59, who started the business with his wife Tong Siew Bee back in 1991.

"When I first started, finding customers was hard," Dr Lim, who is also the executive chairman, recalled.

He said back then, he had to constantly monitor the quality of the products, rectify issues promptly, and provide good customer service.

"The lack of technical knowledge of the manufacturing process also was a challenge. "But, we ensured we consistently met their standards by collaborating with the Malaysian Rubber Research Institute," he said.

Now, Top Glove still faces challenges such as rising operation costs, intensive competition and recruiting and retaining quality staff.

Top Glove currently operates 29 factories within the Asean region in Malaysia and Thailand, with an additional factory in China.

It also has 500 production lines producing 48 billion pieces of rubber gloves per annum.

The firm looks to further expand its global market share from 25 per cent to 30 per cent by 2020.

Hence, Dr Lim said that to speed up Asean's economic progress, tariffs, duty and cost needed to be removed for effective trade among Asean countries.

"This would allow Asean countries to tap into the resources," he said, adding that Asean countries needed to facilitate the usage of manpower to ensure maximisation of resources and economic progress for all.

"Furthermore, to encourage investment between Asean countries, respective governments need to provide guarantee or protect investors from being misled by irresponsible parties."

Dr Lim also said issues of corruption should be addressed as it was the "single greatest obstacle to economic and social development" in the region. THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK