



Lifting a Malaysian Household Name

Jalen's journey shows how an established Malaysian family business can continue to grow by building on trust, strengthening leadership and embracing innovation. Through Khazanah's MTC Growth Innovation Programme (MGIP), Jalen challenged long-held assumptions and sharpened its approach to product development. As a Bumiputera Champion nominee, the company also received mentorship from Khazanah's Managing Director, Dato' Amirul Feisal, helping prepare the business for its next phase of growth.



Founder Datuk Abd Jalil and his wife hosting visitors in the early days of Jalen, which began operations in 1981.

Puan Hajjah Zariah Abd Jalil showing Dato' Amirul Feisal around Jalen's manufacturing facility, highlighting the company's operations and its journey from a family enterprise to an established Malaysian brand.

From a Family Enterprise to a Malaysian Household Name

Kicap Jalen (Jalen's soy sauce) is a familiar name in many Malaysian households. Jalen's soy sauce and ketchup have been staples in kitchens for generations, built over more than four decades from a small family enterprise in Johor Bahru to one of the country's leading condiment manufacturers.

The company's story began with its founder, Datuk Abdul Jalil Long. After serving in the British Army, he returned to Johor Bahru and settled with his family in Kampung Melayu Majidee, where he operated a small village business. It was there that he recognised the commercial potential of soy sauce, a staple condiment that Malaysian kitchens purchased consistently regardless of economic conditions.

In November 1981, he established Jalil Enterprise. The business began as a contract manufacturer producing a handful of products. Every bottle was filled, packed and labelled by hand, and distributed to local retailers using a fleet of just three lorries. In 1990, the business adopted the name Jalen and relocated to a larger three-acre industrial site, where it acquired its first soy sauce production machinery to meet growing demand. This marked an important milestone in Jalen's transition from a small-scale family business to an industrial food producer.

Today, Jalen manufactures 21 products, including five varieties of soy sauce, while expanding distribution from traditional retail outlets to major supermarket chains such as Giant and Maslee. Its products are also exported to markets including Singapore, Brunei, the Maldives, and Mauritius.

Despite this growth, Jalen has remained firmly rooted as a family business. Today, Puan Hajjah Zariah Abd Jalil, daughter of the founder, serves as Group CEO alongside her husband, Amran Baharudin, while their daughter, Aleesya, is already learning the business as a Finance Manager, being trained to lead the company's next chapter. Under Zariah's leadership, Jalen's flagship soy sauce and ketchup products continue to account for approximately 80% of group revenue, demonstrating the enduring strength of the business built by her father more than four decades ago.

For Jalen, growth is also a question of stewardship. As the third generation steps further into the business, the task is not to move away from what made the brand trusted, but to lift that legacy into its next phase. Its participation in MGIP including mentorship by Khazanah's Managing Director, as one of the ten Bumiputera Champions Programme under Ministry of Finance's GEAR-uP, gave the Jalen team the opportunity to reflect more deliberately on its next chapter - as a family business, a Malaysian brand and a company with the potential to grow further.



Going to work is like building the family. Building it to become bigger, stronger, and more resilient."

Aleesya Nadia Amran
Finance Manager, Jalen



The Business Model

Built on Trust, Rooted in Malaysia

Jalen's growth was built on a simple but enduring proposition: making trusted, high-quality, halal condiments accessible to Malaysian families. Recognising early on that soy sauce and condiments were everyday essentials, the company chose to compete by delivering dependable quality at affordable prices. This commitment has helped Jalen earn the trust of consumers across Malaysia. That operating discipline continues to support Jalen's promise of quality and affordability, allowing the company to keep its products accessible to Malaysian families.

Central to this approach is a business model that remains rooted in Malaysia. While certain raw ingredients, such as soybeans, continue to be sourced internationally through long-standing supplier relationships, Jalen's core traders and packaging suppliers are based in Johor Bahru. That proximity allows the company to respond quickly to operational needs and maintain necessary oversight of halal requirements throughout the production process. The factory itself remains in the Johor Bahru area, not far from where the company was first established, a deliberate decision to grow alongside the local economy rather than relocating elsewhere.

The commitment to staying local extends to the workforce as well. Jalen employs approximately 400 people, around 60% of whom work in manufacturing roles, while an estimated 40% come from B40 households. Long employee tenures are common, including families whose employment spans multiple generations. The company complements employment with initiatives such as annual back-to-school assistance for children of employees, compassionate leave and support for selected employees to perform Umrah. This reflects an approach that views workforce stability and wellbeing as part of long-term business success.

The Challenge

Staying Relevant Beyond Success

Despite being one of Malaysia's leading condiment manufacturers, Jalen entered its next stage of growth facing a different kind of challenge. The strengths that had underpinned its success - trusted products, stable operations and consistent demand - also made transformation more challenging. The company had become highly effective at running its core business but had not introduced a major flagship product for several years, as consumer preferences continued to evolve.

For Jalen's leadership, the question was not only how to preserve the trust built over generations, but how to earn the trust of a new generation of consumers. As younger generations adopt different lifestyles and eating habits, Aleesya described the company's priority as one of ensuring that Jalen remains relevant regardless of generational shifts in taste.

At the same time, Jalen recognised that remaining relevant required changes beyond its product portfolio. This meant strengthening its institutional capabilities, clarifying its long-term strategic direction and building the systems needed to play a larger role within Malaysia's food manufacturing ecosystem.

Jalen's experience also reflects a broader challenge faced by many Malaysian mid-tier companies. These businesses contribute around 36% of the country's GDP and employ approximately 16%¹ of the national workforce, but many reach a stage where sustaining growth requires capabilities beyond those that drove their initial success. Alongside access to financing, they often need support to strengthen governance, accelerate innovation, and build the organisational capacity needed for their next phase of development.



Today, the company is strengthening its governance, systems, and organisational capabilities to support future growth while preserving the values that shaped its early development. This approach balances commercial competitiveness with strong local roots."

Puan Hajjah Zariah Abd Jalil
Chief Executive Officer, Jalen

¹"Keynote Address at the MAICSA Regulatory Forum 2024: Evolving Regulatory Landscape," Securities Commission Malaysia, July 24 2024, <https://www.sc.com.my/resources/speeches/keynote-address-at-the-maicsa-regulatory-forum-2024-evolving-regulatory-landscape>.

Impact to Date

(as of early 2026)

Staff **400** workers across Malaysia



Annual Sales

Revenue exceeded RM105 million in 2025; Jalen is targeting

RM200 million
annual revenue in the next two years



Suppliers

50+ of Jalen's suppliers are local companies that help Jalen to source raw materials and packaging domestically and internationally



For Jalen, the most significant change was not a new process, but a new way of thinking.



How Investment Helped Reimagining Growth Through Innovation

Recognising that the next stage of growth required more than incremental improvements, Jalen joined Khazanah Dana Impak's MGIP in September 2025. The programme combined masterclasses, coaching and practical business challenges over several months, supporting companies to strengthen leadership, organisational capabilities and long-term growth strategies.

For Jalen, the most significant change was not a new process, but a new way of thinking. Through the programme, the company was introduced to the "Working Backwards" methodology, an approach to innovation pioneered by global e-commerce giant Amazon that begins with identifying unmet customer needs before designing products or solutions to address them. Rather than building only on what had worked in the past, the methodology encouraged Jalen to question long-held assumptions and rethink how it approached innovation.

This shift in mindset led directly to the development of a new product, which was being prepared for launch at the time of the interview. More importantly, Aleesya described the experience as changing how the company saw itself. Instead of viewing Jalen primarily as a traditional food manufacturer, the programme encouraged the leadership team to embrace a broader identity as an innovative food company. Reflecting on the experience, Aleesya remarked, "I don't think it would have been possible without the programme. We started by challenging our own mindset. That's a very different way of approaching things."

Beyond product innovation, through MGIP and coupled with mentorship by Dato' Amirul Feisal, it gave the team space to step back and think more deliberately about leadership, succession and long-term growth. It provided Jalen with insights on how larger Malaysian corporations and government-linked companies approach organisational development. Through coaching, peer learning, and access to a broader business network, Jalen gained new perspectives on leadership, strategy, and scaling the business. For Aleesya, the greatest value came not from broad business advice, but from targeted support that addressed the company's specific capability gaps as it prepared for its next phase of growth.

Khazanah's programme and platform made significant contributions that extended beyond a single innovation methodology. For a company that had already achieved decades of commercial success, the programme created the space to challenge established ways of thinking and explore new possibilities for growth. In doing so, it helped Jalen move from preserving a legacy towards actively shaping the future for the business.



Looking Ahead

Growing from a Trusted Brand to a National Champion

Having built one of Malaysia's most recognised food brands, Jalen's ambition now extends beyond sustaining commercial success. The company aspires to become one of Malaysia's next national champions, while remaining true to the values and identity that have shaped its growth.

That ambition is increasingly reflected in Jalen's international outlook. In recent years, the company has expanded its participation in trade missions and international exhibitions across markets, including the Middle East, Japan, Australia, and South Korea. Aleesya credits the support of government trade agencies, together with the broader networks developed through Khazanah, with helping the company pursue international opportunities more effectively.

Beyond its own commercial growth, Jalen also hopes to demonstrate what is possible for Malaysian enterprises. Aleesya spoke of the company's aspiration to become a role model for other local businesses, particularly Bumiputera-owned companies, by showing that a family-founded Malaysian brand can grow into a nationally recognised business while remaining rooted in its values. She points to Jalen's sustained profitability, resilient supply chain, and long-standing relationships with employees and suppliers as achievements that have laid the foundation for its next chapter, with a new product launch expected to further strengthen these foundations.



For more information, visit
www.jalen.com.my