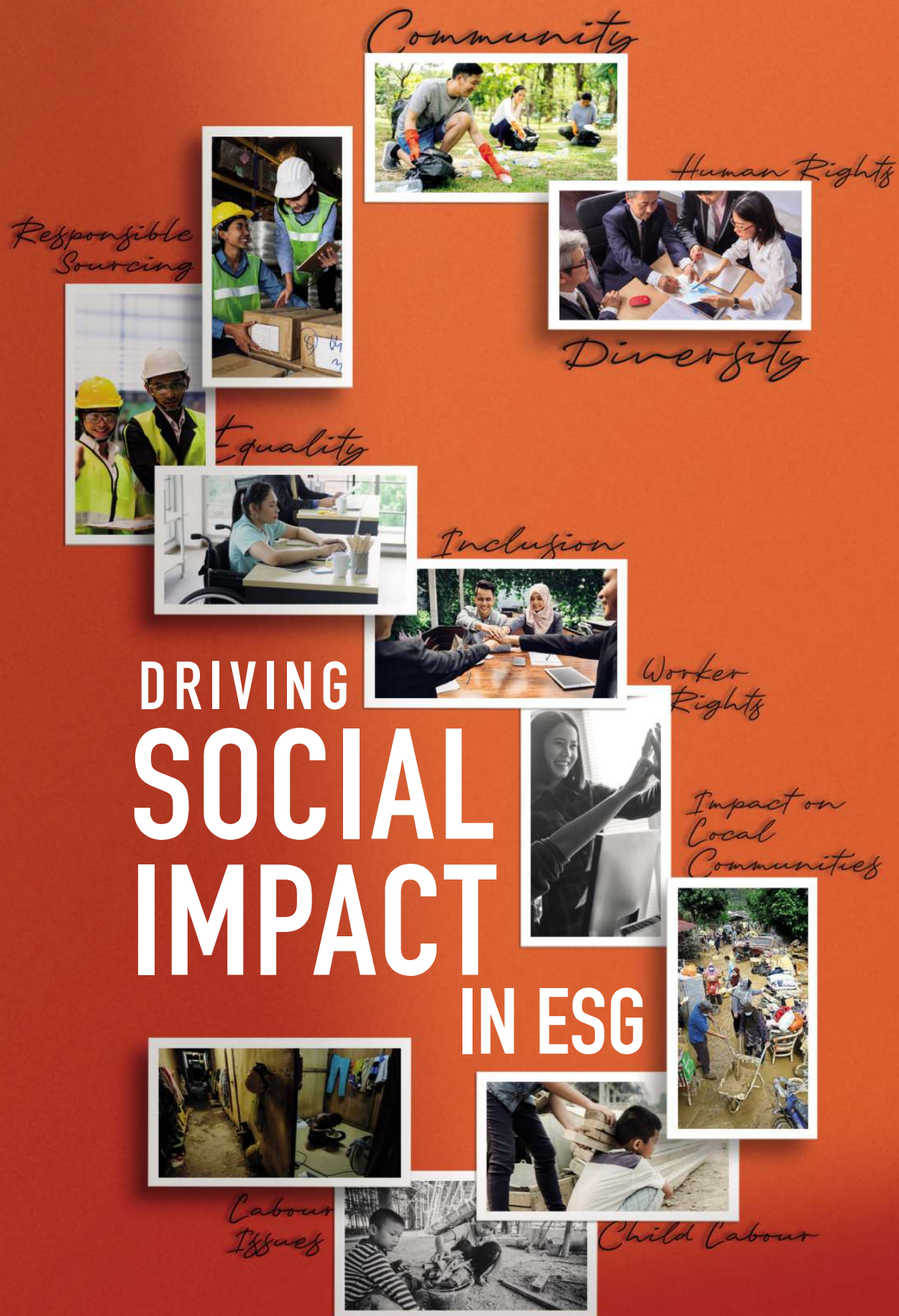


# Star ESG

ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL GOVERNANCE



With increasing scrutiny from regulators, activists and investors alike, governments and companies are starting to take a more serious stance on the social aspect of ESG. Here's how far Malaysia has come - and the way forward to champion a just transition for all.



By THOMAS HUONG  
huong@thestar.com.my

PROMOTING diversity, equity and inclusive-ness (DEI) is important for companies in Malaysia, especially for organisations that want to have robust competitive advantages and sharp differentiation to create their right to win, according to Datuk Ami Moris, chairman of 30% Club Malaysia and CEO of Maybank Investment Banking Group (Maybank IBG).

Ami pointed out that DEI are the driving forces for the mobilisation of human or people capital. “To thrive sustainably with resilience, successful companies typically need four types of capital - human capital together with financial, infrastructure and intellectual capital - that form the foundation from which organisations are built,” she said.

Ami pointed out that ensuring the diversity of demographic representation - around gender, age and social groupings - alongside the equity of access to opportunities for such representation to bring about inclusion - are all at the core of winning the battle for the best talent.

“In today’s world of fast and furious disruptions that requires equally tenacious re-thinking and re-inventing of business models, every Malaysian company will need to have the best talent at every level and domain to elevate their competitiveness and ultimately investability to attract capital at different stages of their growth,” she added.

PwC Malaysia people leader Steve Chia pointed out that the diversity of the Malaysian community should be reflected in workplaces, to allow companies to better serve their clients and stakeholders.

“We may miss out on opportunities if our teams are not diverse, which may close us off from new and emerging markets that result from changes in the business landscape today,” said Chia.

He noted that numerous studies have shown a positive correlation between diversity and innovation, which allow companies to develop innovative solutions and then offer a greater range of products to consumers.

“Studies also show a linkage between higher female representation in top management and greater returns to shareholders,” said Chia, adding that with social media, potential recruits will quickly know which organisations do well and those who do not. “Where there is fierce competition for talent and with the current ‘Great Resignation’, a culture of inclusion may sway a talent’s decision to join,” said Chia.

Lee Soo Fern, who is Ernst & Young (EY) Asean DEI leader and Malaysia talent leader at Ernst & Young Consulting Sdn Bhd, also said DEI are increasingly important for talent attraction, engagement and retention, as well as to factor prominently into environmental, social and governance (ESG) and long-term value.

“As we continue to face unprecedented challenges that impact our people, clients and community, DEI are the levers that help us build trust and stability in times of volatility and uncertainty. Diversity is about differences and inclusiveness is about leveraging these differences to build high performing teams while establishing equity guardrails so that people get the resources and access to opportunities that they need to thrive, considering their different starting points. In doing so, we will have better business results and in turn, investability,” said Lee.

Institute of Corporate Directors Malaysia (ICDM) president and CEO Michele Kythe Lim also said organisations need to know that DEI are more than just mandated company policies, programmes, or headcounts.

“Boards and senior management teams need to play an active and significant role in setting the right tone from the top, one that balances employee morale and needs, productivity and performance,” said Lim.

She added that there is now greater awareness and heightened understanding of the need for different facets of diversity to manage risk and ultimately drive the success of a business.

In July 2021, ICDM, in partnership with WTW (previously known as Willis Towers Watson), launched the Malaysia Board Diversity Study & Index to establish correlations between board diversity and company performance.

Lim noted that a key observation from the

# Thriving sustainably with diversity, equity and inclusiveness

### Studies have shown a positive correlation between diversity and innovation, says PwC Malaysia

study is that a well-constituted board is better placed to achieve sustainable financial performance across key financial performance metrics, suggesting a correlation between board diversity attributes and company financial performance.

As for Hays Malaysia business director David Hedges, he pointed out that DEI encourages “voices” and participation from people with diverse backgrounds, including neurodiverse individuals such as those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and Tourette syndrome.

Hedges explained that with more diverse viewpoints, organisations could tap into strengths and attributes that may be difficult to showcase during the interview process. “Diverse individuals also bring a wider range of problem-solving approaches to the table, which may in turn drive innovation. Organisations with DEI strategies in place often find that employees feel more loyal and motivated to perform,” said Hedges.

Victor Phang, CEO and founder of WorkSmarterly, which aspires to be the leading enterprise HR (human resources)-tech provider globally, is anticipating that more businesses will improve their appreciation of how DEI can benefit their companies in 2022 as a result of Malaysia’s strength as a multiskilled workforce.

Phang noted that there are currently 267,500 working-age Malaysians who have disabilities but are unable to land a job.

“Companies will have access to a fresh talent pool if they embrace diversity and inclusion while taking disability inclusion into consideration,” he said.

According to WorkSmarterly’s study of corporate cultures, when workers believe they and their coworkers will be treated equitably regardless of colour, gender, sexual orientation, or age, they are 5.7 times more likely to wish to remain with their firm for a long time.

“In this disruptive environment, businesses that continue to employ employees of a specific race or culture face the danger of losing money, earning less, and falling behind their competitors. However, businesses that succeed in being inclusive and diverse will create significant value from the distinctions among their employees and thrive,” said Phang.

### DEI issues at workplaces in Malaysia

About 54% of boards of the top 100 public listed companies (PLCs), and 80% of PLCs still have less than 30% women representation which is deemed the minimum critical mass to disrupt groupthink and to pave the way for more successfully diverse and strategic decision making, pointed out Ami.

“The current state also does not adequately reflect the realities of the marketplace where women and female graduates make up 50% of the population,” she said.

Ami noted that for listed companies in Malaysia, the right gender representation and balance at both boards and top leadership are naturally key success factors in building robust, resilient and sustainable companies that offer strong opportunities for the investing public.

She added that there is a clear business case to dig deep and cast the net wide to find the brightest, most talented and competent people to make public listed companies for example, globally competitive and to achieve higher

investability whether amongst institutional or individual investors.

“So leaders need to assume the mindset of proactively fixing the broken rung, and creating the conditions and removing barriers for the best talent to be at the table and to stay. It’s not good enough to say we cannot help women who need flexible hours. Men would need them too as many are sharing in household responsibilities,” said Ami.

Chia noted that companies typically see diversity as “a nice to have, rather than a business imperative”.

“Where there are teams who are made up of mostly men, they tend to recruit others who are like them. This is called similarity bias. It isn’t just confined to gender; we can sometimes see cases where people recruit

“Promoting diversity, equity and inclusiveness (DEI) are important for companies in Malaysia, especially for organisations that want to have robust competitive advantages and sharp differentiation to create their right to win.”  
— Datuk Ami Moris

Datuk Ami Moris, chair of 30% Club Malaysia and CEO of Maybank Investment Banking Group (Maybank IBG)



from the same universities or speak the same language,” he explained.

Chia also pointed out that during the pandemic, many women dropped out of the workforce to care for their family.

“Naturally, this will impact their careers and presents another setback to closing the gender pay gap,” he said, adding that companies should evolve programmes to help women return to work.

Meanwhile, Lim said challenges include driving the DEI agenda from the top – through culture, policies and governance.

“A strong and robust framework has to be in place to guide and govern the organisation on their journey. The policies and procedures need to be in place to challenge internal bias’, status quo and the pre-existing mindset or culture (where relevant),” she said, adding that increasingly, companies are under scrutiny for varying reasons.

In PwC’s Workforce Hope and Fears Survey 2022, after financial remuneration, 69% Malaysian workforce revealed that finding meaning at work matters the most when considering their employment decision.

Lim pointed out that the survey highlighted how employee expectations have evolved and are heightened – especially post-pandemic – and DEI is a key element in the overall working experience employees expect the company to cultivate.

Also, Hedges noted that the primary challenge is the lack of a proper framework for implementing a DEI strategy.

“DEI issues are highly nuanced and to properly understand them requires the allocation of resources and budget for consistent education and training for both employers and employees. Additionally, organisations that have decided on actions to take may yet find it difficult to agree upon clear goals, metrics and benchmarks for progress,” said Hedges.

He suggested that to mitigate this, organisations could tie DEI actions and strategies to key business initiatives.

“For instance, pulsing employees through listening sessions or surveys could be a steppingstone towards enhancing talent acquisition and even retention strategies,” said Hedges.

For Phang, one issue is workplace stereotyping which is a predefined, overly generalised opinion of an individual or group of individuals.

“This type of stereotyping might be based on your prior interactions with people who share your age, gender, ethnicity, background, level of education, or it might be influenced by your judgement and cultural biases (which we all have),” said Phang.

“Numerous prevalent stereotypes are disparaging in the sense that they are founded on unfavourable comparisons to a person’s race, ethnicity, age, gender, politics, or sexual orientation. Stereotypes restrict us from understanding one another and interacting with one another in a productive way based on individuating information. The characteristics that distinguish one person from another are referred to as individuating information,” he explained

As an example, Phang said, “If you make assumptions about your new co-worker based on the unfavourable stereotypes associated with their political party, you face the risk of establishing your relationship with them in a confrontational and unfriendly manner. This can make it very difficult for you to cooperate.”



Phang: ‘Companies will have access to a fresh talent pool if they embrace diversity and inclusion.’



Lee: ‘DEI are the levers that help us build trust and stability in times of volatility and uncertainty.’



Chia: ‘We may miss out on opportunities if our teams are not diverse.’



Hedges: ‘DEI encourages ‘voices’ and participation from people with diverse backgrounds.’



Lim: ‘Organisations need to know that DEI is more than just mandated company policies.’

### Comparison with other countries

“The state of affairs is mixed in Malaysia and as in any country. Women hold 26% of board seats amongst the top 100 PLCs and only 18% of seats of all PLCs in Malaysia. Interestingly in Thailand, the proportion is reversed at 19% and 21% respectively,” said Ami.

She pointed out that some multinationals are naturally further on the DEI scale, driven by a global mandate.

“The 30% Club Malaysia has corporate advocates interested in participating because their head offices support the 30% Club in the United Kingdom,” she said.

Meanwhile, large Malaysian companies such as PETRONAS and Maybank have rolled out DEI initiatives.

Maybank Group is amongst four PLCs in Malaysia and 418 in the world to be part of Bloomberg’s Gender Equality Index.

At Maybank, women hold 31% of board seats above the minimum target of 30%; and account for 41% of senior management, the target is 45% by 2025.

Ami also noted that as local institutional investors such as Employees’ Provident Fund (EPF) integrate DEI considerations in its investment mandate, more of their investees will be compelled to take DEI more seriously.

Meanwhile, Chia pointed out that regarding women’s participation in the workplace, a Global Gender Gap Report 2021 by the World Economic Forum shows that East Asia and the Pacific (68.9%) was one of the three most-improved regions in 2021, having narrowed its gender gaps on three of the four sub-indexes (economic, education, health) but regressing on the political gender gap.

“As companies address their ESG priorities and align with Malaysia’s net-zero commitment, there needs to be a focus on designing gender responsive policies that enable women to have equal access to future job opportunities,” he said.

According to PwC’s Women in Work Index 2022, new green jobs will be concentrated in a few sectors such as utilities, construction and manufacturing, which are male-dominated.

“This will perpetuate further inequity unless steps are taken now to expand access to these sectors. This includes policies to increase the representation of women in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) studies and careers or providing more access to green finance for women entrepreneurs,” noted Chia.

He added that businesses, for example those in the energy sector, should also take this chance to boost female recruitment and representation and redesign policies to encourage more flexibility for both genders, helping to eliminate biases towards people who work flexibly.

According to Lim, Malaysia has seen tremendous growth in promoting DEI and “we continue to see efforts by businesses pushing this agenda forward.”

Lim noted that people are more aware and expect more responsible and ethical behaviour from companies and businesses – a Global Investor Study 2022 found that young investors felt more empowered to influence corporate decision-making through investments, prioritising principles and values when it comes to investing.

She pointed out that more are adopting and employing policies and practices that cater to the needs of different employee segments, age, gender and level.

“Early this year, four Malaysian companies, namely Bursa Malaysia Bhd, Digi.Com

Bhd, Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank) and Top Glove Corp Bhd, have been included in the 2022 Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index (GEDI), which is an index that recognises PLCs that bring transparency to gender-related practices and policies, increasing the breadth of ESG data available to investors,” said Lim.

She added that overall, boardroom priorities in 2022 have shifted and Asean boards across this region are aware of the need to do things differently to safeguard organisational resilience and create long-term value.

ICDM’s 2022 Asean Board Trends Survey published late last year showcased key trends that may impact boardrooms and they include Asean boards recognising the importance of board refreshment (51%), which is key to ensure board diversity.

Meanwhile, the Hays Diversity & Inclusion Report (2019/2020) found that more Malaysian respondents believed ethnicity lowered their chances of being selected for a job, compared to other Asian countries like Singapore, Japan and China.

Additionally, the report also found a decline in the number of female line managers, alongside a drop-in belief in the equality of career progression.

“Salary levels followed a similar trend and there is still a notion that pay levels across seniority and genders lack transparency,” said Hedges.

Phang pointed out that 56% of women in Malaysia had encountered some sort of gender discrimination at work, according to the “Voices of Malaysian Women On Discrimination & Harassment in the Workplace” survey.

He noted that factors such as discrimination, harassment and a heavier unpaid care burden that impacts both employees and job searchers, contribute to women’s poor involvement in the workforce.

“Also, according to reports, 62% of men hold management jobs now, compared to only 38% of women in Malaysia,” said Phang.

### Challenges involving DEI in workplaces

Ami urged corporate leaders to go beyond the lip service of believing in DEI to questioning on a day-to-day basis business-as-usual thinking and actions.

“Sometimes, expediency and “if it ain’t broken, why fix it” is an enemy to greatness. Companies must be prepared to slay sacred cows,” she pointed out.

Ami proposed that at the board level, concrete steps to operationalise DEI can include getting the diversity right at the selection panel or nominating committee.

“Set the tone from the top. Ask for a 50:50 list, for example, four men, four women so that both genders have equal chances of succeeding,” she said.

Another step to integrate DEI should be to remove the criteria that candidates must have prior board experience before they can be considered so that companies can tap into a bigger pool of applicants

Including those coming out from the workplace with the latest expertise.

“Look out for candidates with skillsets that are very much needed today but are lacking in the current board such as in sustainability, change management and digital transformation. These are dynamic fields that do require latest practical know-how,” said Ami.

“Also, please hold management accountable. Ask for the data, set realistic targets that link to business objectives, implement and of course, fine-tune. There’s no silver bullet answer,” she added.

Meanwhile, Lee pointed out that a culture change requires concerted efforts from both the organisation (employer) and employees.

“The organisation needs to enable the culture change starting with establishing a baseline and cascading awareness, to institutionalising DEI through clear narratives, policies, processes, clear measurements (key performance indicators or KPIs/scorecards), learning, performance management, reward and having a dedicated team that drives the DEI agenda,” said Lee, while the employees need to influence the culture through understanding and practicing inclusive leadership and behaviours.

“Making DEI systemic requires investment of time, effort and money and a clear tone from the top management. It needs to be seen as a business imperative, not another human resource initiative,” added Lee.

Lim noted that one challenge is that the misalignment between employer and employees.

“A Global Trends in Employee Engagement 2022 report highlighted that amidst the fluctuating and uncertain environment we operate in, many organisations are trying something new - testing, learning and refining, whilst others are holding back in the hope that things will go back to “normal”, an indication that companies are not moving fast enough to address employees’ expectations and needs,” said Lim.

Lim added that challenges need to be addressed from the top.

“On this front, ICDM will continue to work with industry experts to bring capacity building programmes relevant to this area to equip directors with the right knowledge and tools to respond to these challenges.

For instance, ICDM hosted a PowerTalk on Talent Uprising to provide deeper insights to the trends and themes in culture and talent and its impact on organisational success,” said Lim.

Meanwhile, Phang pointed out that bringing together a varied group of people might also result in some difficulties and communication problems.

“Your team may include members who have hearing impairments, various communication preferences or styles, or language barriers. It’s crucial to handle these difficulties before they become an issue,” he said.

Phang noted that an organisation is likely to experience more bias, discrimination and harassment as its workforce becomes more diverse.

“More than 50% of employees have seen or been the victim of discrimination at work because of their age, colour, gender, or sexual orientation. This may prevent workers from bringing their true self to work, which would limit collaboration, creativity and innovation,” he said.

### Progress in Malaysian companies

The percentage of women holding board seats amongst top 100 PLCs has doubled from 2014 at 13% to 26% in 2021.

Ami noted that a key catalyst has been policy, as the Malaysia Code of Corporate Governance has prescribed for companies to have at least 30% women representation at board level and to explain the reason if this is not fulfilled.

By June 2023, all PLCs in Malaysia must have at least one woman director.

“It’s shocking that there are some 200 companies with all-male boards,” she said, urging boards and top management to have an unrelenting pursuit to find and retain the best people.

“As Peter Grauer, Bloomberg chairman

and global DEI advocate said at Maybank’s Invest Asean conference, DEI is an evolutionary process, not a revolutionary one. While leaders and capital market

regulators can mandate more gender diversity, this has to be supported by bottom up action so that the benefits of DEI are realised. We don’t want this to be just a box-ticking exercise, which I appreciate does happen. The worst case is to engage in pink-washing,” said Ami.

Chia said there has been progress among leading companies in Malaysia, in providing support and retaining women.

“There are also more companies who employ people who are differently-abled, for example, people with hearing impairment or who are on the autism spectrum,” he said.

Chia added there is a global trend of an increase in investors who prioritise good ESG practices in investee companies.

“This will influence business leaders who, in the past may not prioritise DEI, to see the value of integrating it within their businesses,” he said.

In PwC’s 2021 Annual Corporate Directors Survey, 52% of directors surveyed support tying executive compensation to diversity and inclusion goals, up from 38% in 2020.

Meanwhile, Lim noted that from a board and director perspective, ICDM has seen a marked change in board priorities and dynamics.

“Today, board attention and priorities on performance is underpinned by the understanding of the need to move the needle on culture, as a catalyst for more engaged, productive and higher performance employees,” said Lim.

Also, ICDM aims to create a structured path to build a pipeline of high-calibre, quality director candidates.

“In the ICDM director registry, young directors under 40 years old and between 40 and 49 years old comprises 22% and we hope to continue growing this pipeline. On this front, we are seeing the shift

amongst Malaysia’s boards in their commitment to DEI by changing the way they source, nominate and appoint directors. This is evident with the increased number of requests in independent director sourcing,” said Lim.

From January 2021 to April 2022, ICDM received 87 independent sourcing requests, compared to 42 in the previous reporting period.

“We have successfully placed 12 directors in the first four months of 2022 alone. Our clients come from a wide range of industries, from consumer products and services to energy and transportation and logistics,” said Lim.

Amongst the most sought-after expertise for these director sourcing and placement requests are skill sets related to sustainability and ESG.

“We have also successfully placed first-time directors on a listed board. This demonstrates that companies are increasingly more inclined to welcome to their boards first-time directors who possess the necessary skill sets required,” added Lim.

Hedges also concurred that over the years, DEI in Malaysia has certainly seen some progress.

According to the 2022 Global Gender Gap report, Malaysia rose from 112 the year before to 103 in ranking.

“This likely be due to the growing public awareness of the importance of DEI, which have led to organisations implementing organisation-wide strategies to further





'My husband has polio and I'm a stroke survivor so you can imagine that mobility is a major concern for us. Perhaps that's why DBKL selected us to be beneficiaries,' said Foo.



Rumah PPR (Program Perumahan Rakyat) like this one located in Kg Muhibbah in KL is an initiative by the government to provide income earners within and under the B40 category to find a home and eradicate squatter areas throughout the nation.

By CHOW ZHI EN  
zhien.chow@thestar.com.my

# TNB provides homes for a brighter community

Utility company's Projek Mesra Rakyat part of community-building for B40 folks

PEOPLE have attributed the 'S' in environmental, social and governance (ESG) in many different ways – as social issues, labour standards and working conditions, human rights, equitable pay, workplace diversity, data security and privacy, and even as supply-chain issues.

While this aspect is still a new frontier, what's clear is that this aspect of ESG is what drives prosocial behaviour leading to social corporate impact.

To this end, Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) has aligned their social pillar with prosocial initiatives.

For instance, besides rural development – like through its Rural Electrification Programme (BELB) and Bakul Prihatin Negara (National Food Basket Programme) – TNB also looks at contributing to community development through two concurrent projects, namely Program Baiti Jannati (PBJ) and Program Mesra Rakyat (PMR).

Suffice to say that everyone dreams of owning a house one can call home – a symbol of love and memories, a place to rest and recharge. Owning a house is a symbolic entry into adulthood too.

Although it's easy to see and agree that home ownership is a necessity, not everybody has the financial capacity to afford one. In reality, there are many factors that contribute to why Malaysians may not be able to afford homes, even if a select few were fortunate enough to inherit land.

## Putting the 'S' in ESG

To put the social aspect of ESG values in context, a simple way to look at it is "doing the right thing". With that, it then reflects that good public relations begins with good behaviour.

Under their "Brighter Community" pillar, TNB conducts various community engagements that leaves a lasting positive impact on our people and communities.

As the focus on the social (S) aspect grows, TNB's contributions to community development help enable access to electricity which is itself an enabler of development, social welfare, improved health-care and socio-economic growth.

For TNB, these manifest as proactive initiatives in community-building when looking at the utility company's sustainability report FY2021.

While the wider sustainability



Mak Meng Fook (left) and his brother Meng Yoon, a retired construction worker, used to rent a room for RM200 a month before Meng Fook received aid from TNB.

agenda locally and internationally spurs more fundamental changes in markets, TNB still considers public policy to better serve the needs of their key stakeholders – the people.

## Who stands to benefit

Projek Mesra Rakyat (PMR) is a part of TNB's corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ESG-driven initiative to help B40 folks fix, buy or renovate their own house with a contribution value of not more than RM50,000.

Since 2014, TNB has rebuilt 249 homes to deserving beneficiaries in Kuala Lumpur.

At the national level, 220 homes

have benefited under the PMR programme with a total contribution value of RM7.46mil.

In 2020 alone, a dozen beneficiaries managed to put a roof over their heads with TNB's help.

"Considering that in Kuala Lumpur it is quite difficult to build a house due to land constraints, TNB works with DBKL to find the right group who needs assistance," said TNB chief global business solutions officer Ahmad Hushairi Ibrahim.

In continued partnership with Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL), this year TNB continues to help lower income folks raise their quality of life.

The government has had a

long-standing history in creating policies and initiatives to further aid those lower on the socio-economic ladder to own homes.

To understand what B40 is, there are three different categories based on monthly income per household and beyond:

- > T20 (Top 20%) – RM10,960 to RM15,040
- > M40 (Middle 40%) – RM4,850 to RM10,959
- > B40 (Bottom 40%) – anything less than RM2,500 to RM4,849.

As property prices continue on their premium trend, home ownership becomes a prospect limited to the M40 and T20 groups.

And with long-standing collaboration with the Malaysian government, PMR has helped the B40 group to be homeowners.

## Roof over their head

One beneficiary is Foo Huey Kuang. The 45-year-old newspaper seller along with her husband reside in Lembah Beringin PPR.

"Both of us are less-abled bodies. My husband has polio and I'm a stroke survivor so you can imagine that mobility is a major concern for us. Perhaps that's why DBKL selected us to be beneficiaries," Foo said.

"We didn't directly apply for TNB's programme. One day they called us saying that we had been selected as beneficiaries to receive a new house," she added.

In just two weeks from the moment Foo received the call, she was able to move into her new house with her husband.

"We used to rent a house but now that TNB has given us a place of our own, we can use the rent money to put to other use.

"I was very excited and happy when they called me because I truly never expected this sort of help to happen to me – especially when they revealed that we'd soon be homeowners," she said.

Another recent beneficiary is Mak Meng Fook, a retired electrician who hails from Seremban.

The 68-year-old used to install

lights and fans for a living. But as he got older, he had to resort to collecting old newspapers, bottles and cans to make ends meet.

Mak suffered a stroke in December of 2019. He now has to walk slowly with a crutch and lives off the goodwill of churchgoers who give him food every day from Monday to Friday.

Previously, Mak had inherited an old wooden house from his grandfather before it was lost in a blaze that broke from a vacant house next door back in July 2020.

Following that, he ended up renting a room in a double-storey house together with nine other singles.

"When I lost my house, I thought I had lost everything and would never have a place to stay anymore. An ADUN helped me to apply for TNB's PMR house four or five months after I lost my house," said Mak.

"I never expected that it could be approved and never in my dreams would I expect to have such a nice house. I am greatly thankful to TNB. I'm incredibly moved to have a new house.

"I'm grateful to have my brother and sister-in-law to look after me and ensure that I have food at least. He is living with his own family.

"As I couldn't walk much, my brother helped me to follow up on progress during the construction. After all the preparation, construction of the house began in October or November last year (2021)."

On his plan after moving into his new house, he said his life could be better with the savings of the RM200 rent at his old place. He wants to continue collecting recyclables like newspapers, cans and bottles to make an honest living.

All beneficiaries of PMR are from non-Muslim communities and in Kuala Lumpur, and are involved in the DBKL People's Housing Project.

TNB's other initiative called Projek Baiti Jannati focuses on Muslim communities.



# WE'RE FINDING NEW WAYS TO PUT GOOD ENERGY INTO HOMES AND HEARTS.

By committing 1% of our Profit After Tax, we're uplifting the lives  
of communities in need by putting aid in the right places.  
Making lives better, and our future brighter.

Together, let's welcome a brighter tomorrow for all.

**NET ZERO**  
2050

Tenaga Nasional Berhad 199001009294 (200866-W)

Scan to watch  
our journey to  
a brighter world.



**THE SPARKS OF TODAY,  
POWER BRIGHTER TOMORROWS.**







To nurture young leaders for the next generation to trigger a multiplier effect for a better world, IOIPG has granted scholarships through Yayasan TLSLC amounting to RM10mil.

STARESG, FRIDAY 29 JULY 2022



In April 2022, a dedicated underpass for direct access into IOI Rio to ease traffic in Lebuhraya Puteri, as well as an additional underpass measuring 80m in length under the Rio City interchange, were officially opened.

STARESG, FRIDAY 29 JULY 2022



With the aim of fostering community well-being, IOIPG also focuses its efforts on providing communal green spaces that encourage interaction and recreational activities, while at the same time, also providing an eco-friendly habitat for urban biodiversity.

# Creating sustainable cities and communities

By CALYN YAP  
calyn@thestar.com.my



LED by a community-first approach, IOI Properties Group (IOIPG) is committed to creating meaningful value for its communities – be it conserving precious resources, helping communities in need, supporting future generations, or creating urban green spaces for people and nature to thrive in harmony.

Encompassing values that can make a difference, these efforts are in support of Goal 11 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) and demonstrates IOIPG's dedication towards the greater value of making a positive impact on surrounding communities.

## Raising awareness on water security

To encourage sustainable living through water conservation and responsible consumption of natural resources, IOIPG has collaborated with its business partners and contractors to build rainwater harvesting systems within the communities in which it operates.

Since 2021, rain harvesting systems have been installed in SJK(T) Sg Ara in Penang; Rumah Shalom in Puchong; Surau Al-Munawwarah in Klang and Rumah Orang Tua Bukit Siput in Segamat, amongst others. This is in addition to the IOI Water for Life initiative, whereby IOIPG collaborated with Pertubuhan Komuniti Elite to provide Orang Asli communities access to clean drinking water. Consumption of contaminated water can cause diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, dysentery and typhoid.

Hence, through this corporate social responsibility (CSR) project, IOIPG wants to create awareness among its staff and the

general public about the lack of potable water supply to the Orang Asli communities. IOIPG has identified suitable water filters that can treat raw water into potable water.

Via IOI Water for Life, IOIPG and its business associates raised funds to deploy 66 water filters to Orang Asli communities in Johor, namely Kampung Orang Asli Gunung Arung, Endau; Kampung Orang Asli Pasir Salam, Ulu Tiram, as well as Kampung Chemomoi in Pahang.

The initiatives are well in line with UNSDG Goal 6, which is to ensure access to water and sanitation for all, as well as address the quality and sustainability of water resources that are critical to the survival of people and the planet.

Along the same lines, IOIPG also organised a mudball activity at Hutan Bandar Kulai this year. Together with the Kulai Municipal Council and the local community, the team released about 12,000 mudballs to improve the water quality of the lake at Hutan Bandar Kulai and create a conducive habitat for the biodiverse flora and fauna to thrive.

## Building urban green spaces for life

With the aim of fostering community well-being, IOIPG also focuses its efforts on providing communal green spaces that encourage interaction and recreational activities, while at the same time, providing an eco-friendly habitat for urban biodiversity.

Consisting of distinctive themed gardens and recreational areas, these communal green spaces are furnished with facilities and fixtures that encourage healthy lifestyles and integrated communities.

At the same time, these spaces act as carbon sequestration sites, while providing fresh air to the local communities.

These green parks include Central Park in 16 Sierra; themed parklands in Warisan Puteri Sepang; Oasis Park in Bandar Puteri Bangi and Bandar Puteri Town Park in Bandar Puteri Puchong, as well as the 100-acre Hutan Bandar Kulai in Johor.

Upgrading works of the RM1.4mil Bandar Puteri Town Park was concluded in the first quarter of 2022. The urban regeneration of this 11-acre park features upgraded walkways and cycling tracks, a playground, fitness stations and benches to improve the park experience for the local community.

Furthermore, solar-powered lighting has also been installed in the park to reduce its



IOIPG also organised a mudball activity, along with the Kulai Municipal Council and the local community, to improve water quality of the lake at Hutan Bandar Kulai in Johor.

carbon footprint.

But IOIPG is not resting on its laurels, as the group will be revealing its upcoming IOI Resort City Central Park.

The 10-acre park, which will be anchored by a lake and various features that enable communities to thrive harmoniously with nature, has an estimated development cost of approximately RM53.6mil.

As part of its commitments towards its biodiversity target of preserving 5% of trees of every valuable species, an inventory study was done to identify and preserve trees listed under the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species for in-situ conservation before the construction of the facility begins.

These efforts build on top of the group's drive towards a greener future and reducing carbon footprint by building sustainability into its developments.

## Advocating low carbon lifestyles

By embracing transit-oriented developments to advocate low-carbon lifestyles and reduce carbon emissions, IOIPG integrates connectivity to transportation hubs in its signature developments.

For instance, provisions for bus stops are essential in its design process to provide sufficient support for a strong public transport infrastructure, with public transit services integrated into these developments. The 16 Sierra Mass Rapid Transit station is scheduled to commence operations in January 2023.

In Bandar Puteri Puchong, its latest transit-oriented development, Stellar Suites, is built only 50m away from the Bandar Puteri LRT station.

IOIPG has also provided covered pedestrian walkways and cycling pathways to enhance short-distance travel connectivity between neighbourhoods and lower the dependency on motorised vehicles, to help improve local air quality and reduce carbon footprint.

Traffic enhancement to improve traffic flow and enhance connectivity in Bandar Puteri Puchong commenced in 2016.

The traffic enhancements included the construction of a flyover from the Damansara-Puchong Highway (LDP) to Lebuhraya Puteri to improve connectivity towards Bandar Puteri Puchong.

There was also construction of a 35m covered pedestrian bridge and walkway to



Via IOI Water for Life, IOIPG and its business associates raised funds to deploy 66 water filters to Orang Asli communities in Johor, namely Kampung Orang Asli Gunung Arung, Endau; Kampung Orang Asli Pasir Salam, Ulu Tiram, as well as Kampung Chemomoi in Pahang.

In Xiamen, China, IOIPG contributed RMB7.3mil to the building of a kindergarten.



IOI Water for Life is in line with UNSDG Goal 6, which is to ensure access to water and sanitation for all.

improve accessibility for pedestrians travelling between Puchong Financial Corporate Centre and the Taman Perindustrian Puchong LRT station.

In April 2022, the Rio City Interchange was officially opened, completing the traffic enhancement of Bandar Puteri Puchong at a total cost of RM90mil, which was fully borne by IOIPG.

## Amplifying impact on communities

During the Covid-19 pandemic, IOIPG played its part to help communities via a range of CSR efforts, via its 'Think WE Not ME' campaign.

The campaign – which supports business

associates, tenants and communities in challenging times – includes contributions towards buying essential items for communities in need and Covid-19 rental relief assistance to support its tenants. To date, IOIPG has provided rental relief assistance totalling more than RM100mil.

Altogether, these efforts have been publicly acknowledged, as IOIPG's leadership in supporting the community during the pandemic earned it the Community CSR Award in the iProperty Development Excellence Awards (iDEA) 2020.

The group also helped out during floods with contributions of essentials and cleaning the homes of flood victims, where beneficiaries across Semenyih, Dengkil and Sungai

IOIPG was accorded the Community CSR Award at the iProperty.com.my Development Excellence Awards (iDEA) 2020. The group also received an A rating in the MSCI ESG rating assessment in 2022.

Kandis also received household items. Besides that, a reading corner was set up in the community hall of Kampung Orang Asli Kuala Masai to inculcate reading habit among Orang Asli children and create awareness towards the importance of education on improving their quality of life. IOIPG donated books, educational CDs and stationery for the 50 kids in the kampung. Digital devices such as desktops, laptops and projectors were also donated to expose them to information technology.

## Nurturing tomorrow's leaders

Separately, to nurture young leaders for the next generation to trigger a multiplier effect for a better world, IOIPG contributed to universities, school buildings and facilities upgrades to ensure a conducive learning environment.

A few of the beneficiaries are Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Kuen Cheng High School, SJK (C) Shin Cheng and Xiamen University.

Its initiatives in education are not just limited to Malaysia, either. In Xiamen, China, IOIPG contributed RMB7.3mil to the building of a kindergarten, which is expected to benefit two surrounding residential communities with a population of approximately 20,000 residents.

Through Yayasan Tan Sri Lee Shin Cheng (Yayasan TLSLC), scholarships amounting to over RM10mil have been distributed to more than 300 students to date.

The scholarships have enabled high-calibre students to pursue full-time undergraduate studies.

A total of RM5mil was also contributed to the Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Hospital Building Fund to enable clinical training for healthcare students.

All in all, IOIPG's social initiatives are in line with the group's vision to be a 'Trusted' brand, as it is committed to continuing its efforts to create thriving and sustainable communities.



# Changing waste for good

By CHOW ZHI EN

zhien.chow@thestar.com.my

A LESS-TALKED-ABOUT aspect of environmental, social and governance (ESG) is circularity, better known as the circular economy.

Specifically, there's a strong connection between clean water (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) and life on land (SDG 15).

The circular economy emphasises not only waste management, but also reuse, recycling and responsible manufacturing to support the development of new industries, reduce emissions and increase efficient use of natural resources.

For Zaquin Resources Sdn Bhd (Zaquin), its managing director and founder Ahmad Tarmimi Tahang goes one step further to pursue the net zero waste goal and to achieve circularity in the waste management industry.

Established in 2004, Zaquin grew from a small waste and environmental services provider to a company that now employs over 60 full-time staff with operations in metropolitan and remote locations around Johor Baru.

Collaborating with local authorities by providing waste management services and cleaning services, among others, Ahmad explains that his vision is to provide services for the community.

He explains, "The service industry is a tough one but for us it's a two-way street, where both Zaquin and the community we serve benefit from our services. We want to contribute in a meaningful way to the public and to the country."

"Wherever we live, a clean environment directly improves the quality of day-to-day life - it means a healthier life, less diseases and less pollution. So for Zaquin, we want to make sure that the environment remains liveable."

The environmental benefits of reducing waste are obvious for many.

Reducing waste means improving resource efficiency. As our finite resources become scarcer, their prices go up with long-lasting impacts on the environment.

Zaquin explores the circular economy through its values, activities and operations.

"Normal activities across industries follow a linear chain, but by reusing and reutilising resources, we can reduce the amount going into landfills.

"The value chain in waste management starts with waste generation then storage, recycling or recovery, treatment and disposal. For a circular economy model, up until the disposal stage, we don't dispose of waste. Instead, we reuse the waste as energy or resources," he says.

By improving their storage capabilities, Zaquin is able to be more efficient in the recovery and treatment stage.

He adds, "We plan our separation at the source (waste generation) so it's easier for us to recycle, recover and treat the waste. The less waste you generate, the less it will cost you.

"We also introduced a new method of collection via smart deep collection systems - which has already been implemented for over a decade in Europe - and localised it for the communities we serve."

Zaquin's current headquarters is based in EcoWorld's Eco Business Park I, where the company started its waste collection services previously for EcoWorld and their developments in Johor.

Ahmad and his team at Zaquin attribute the ability to take an integrated approach to sustainability and circularity to EcoWorld, which he says shares the same goals.

"We actively welcome businesses such as Zaquin Resources to our projects as their presence can help create awareness and appreciation of the importance of environmental responsibility," says EcoWorld Development Group Bhd president and chief executive officer Datuk Chang Khim Wah.

He added, "EcoWorld also believes strongly in co-creation. One of the ways we do this is via close collaboration with academics, researchers and non-governmental organisations to evaluate how our efforts to combat climate change can be improved, as demonstrated by the pilot carbon capture study project undertaken at Eco Ardence, which was featured in our Sustainability Report 2021."

As a supporter of the circular economy too, Chang noted that "recognising one person's waste can be another's treasure" ensures that the developer is always looking for opportunities to work with like-minded people and businesses.

"Wherever and whenever we can, we organise events that encourage our supply chain and communities to recycle, upcycle and reuse materials and other waste products.

"Working together with like-minded people and businesses will further develop the circular economy and reduce the reliance on landfills whilst contributing to economic growth," he said.



*The idea of establishing Zaquin as a start-up focused on cleaning services and landscaping emerged in late 2004.*



*EcoWorld's Eco South region, which includes the developer's Eco Business Parks, have contributed to a total of 14% of 28,129kg of recyclable waste in 2021.*

## > FROM PAGE 3

improve DEI, as well as setting up collaborative roundtables for diverse employee groups to share their input on diversity. However, there remains much room for progress," said Hedges.

Phang pointed out that women are increasingly holding managerial positions at the middle and lower levels across enterprises, which fosters a diverse work environment.

"In addition, there are a lot of households with just one parent and most of them are headed by women. As a result, more women are working in organisations, which calls for new sets of work standards and regulations," he said.

Phang also noted that many companies are modifying their policies to make it easier for families to balance dual careers.

## Organisations walking the talk

Meanwhile, the 30% Club Malaysia is part of a business-led global campaign founded in the United Kingdom with the primary aim of promoting gender balance in boardrooms.

Its goal is to reach 30% women representation amongst top 100 PLCs by 2023 and for all PLCs by 2030.

The 30% Club Malaysia engages with boards and senior leaders on the business case and how to achieve DEI and is also involved in shaping policies, contributing to industry consultation, communicating DEI best practices and aligning with institutional investors as they can influence boards.

Also, PwC Malaysia and 30% Club Malaysia have been collaborating to improve diversity on boards.

Chia noted that by activating the movement among corporate leaders and leveraging key influencers in the investor community and government groups, women representation on the boards of the top 100 PLCs in Malaysia has risen from 14% in 2015 to 28.2% as at July 1, 2022.

To create a sustainable pipeline of talent, the 30% Club Malaysia in collaboration with PwC Malaysia, launched a Board Mentoring Scheme in 2017 to bring together experienced board directors and aspiring board-ready women to accelerate the appointment of more women into board positions.

As of February 2022, 68 mentees have completed the nine-month programme, of which 33% are serving on boards of listed and non-listed companies.

Companies can get involved to champion DEI, learn and contribute by joining the 30% Club Malaysia as a Corporate Advocate.

Chia pointed out that at PwC Malaysia, the recruitment strategy has been curated with DEI in mind.

"We work with different colleges and universities to ensure we can get a diverse pool of talents, aiming for diversity in gender, social or educational background. We hire graduates from both the local and overseas pool and as we rethink our delivery model, we also recruit talents who are diploma holders and school leavers with technical and vocational education and training to provide them with opportunities to develop and grow with us with the relevant educational support programmes or obtain their professional accounting qualifications through our 'Earn While You Learn' programme," he said.

Also, PwC Malaysia has recruited 20 women career break returnees since 2015 through the TalentCorp Career Comeback Programme.

In 2022, PwC Malaysia also set a long-term diversity target, which is one of its leadership KPIs that is being tracked and reported on annually.

To help parents manage family and work, PwC Malaysia has policies that include up to six consecutive days off to care for children who are infected by Covid-19.

The company also extended paternity leave from five days to 30 days in 2019, among the first in the market to do so.

Meanwhile, Lee pointed out that EY has embedded DEI in its strategy execution plan to help realise its long-term ambition.

She explained that EY's approach is systemic and holistic, including an estab-

lished DEI team structure and resources to drive and execute priorities, an annual DEI tracker with clear targets to measure progress, a culture change road map towards the highest performing teams, a global social equity taskforce with a clear mandate to drive activation across regions and markets through locally relevant social equity campaigns, as well as a clear and inclusive leadership strategy that requires all leaders to complete a high-touch learning session and all employees to complete an inclusive leadership for all e-learning.

EY also has policies and guidelines on workplace behaviors, flexibility, well-being and an inclusive work culture, regular surveys on employee experience with specific questions relating to DEI and the organisation makes DEI part of performance management of leaders and people.

Meanwhile, mental health and wellness is a key focus of ICDM and Lim explained that initiatives were organised to keep employees engaged during the various periods of lockdowns.

"We have adopted a hybrid work model with two optional work-from-home days per week to help employees balance work and life while maintaining the important in-person experience. Occasion-driven work attire is also part of the new normal in ICDM," said Lim.

This year, ICDM will embark on an external independent employee survey to better understand their needs.

Lim noted that the ICDM team is made up of a mix of individuals from different backgrounds and expertise.

"In terms of gender diversity, our team is currently made up 70% females and we hope to achieve a more balanced gender diversity as we move forward. We also have a good mix of people from different age groups and locations - East and West Malaysia," she said.

As for the ICDM board composition, it has 36% female directors and 25% are below the age of 40.

"They are made up of a balanced mix of cultures and skills, from regulatory to entrepreneurial, education to banking. These are the values we uphold in ICDM and are advocating to the business community via our research, advocacy dialogues, board effectiveness evaluation as well as director sourcing services and programmes," said Lim.

According to Hedges, Hays emphasises robust equal pay policies to ensure that male and female employees are paid fairly for equivalent work as part of the company's efforts to close the gender pay gap.

"Internally, we focus on building awareness, especially among female employees of the support that is available to them, such as ensuring that our policies on maternity and parental leave are visible and easy to understand.

"We also raised a new manager-led review for returners four months after they return to work to talk about their experiences and discuss any additional support if they need," he said.

Also, all new employees at Hays are required to attend training sessions on unconscious bias and how to avoid it leading to unconscious discrimination.

"This is further enhanced with our blind recruitment process internally - where personally identifiable information such as name, gender, age and education, is omitted from applicant CVs to have a more diverse selection to support diversity in our newest hires," said Hedges.

He also noted that Hays Malaysia recently celebrated the promotion of its first home-grown country director, Natasha Ishak, to oversee the operations for both of its offices in Malaysia - Kuala Lumpur and Sunway, "truly walking the talk".

Meanwhile, Phang said WorkSmartly supports the promotion of all aspects of its DEI policy and apply them in overall people practices at work for all levels.

"This year, we declared a group wide paid holiday for all employees on April 14, as we acknowledge that there is no gazetted public holiday for Tamil New Year and Vaisakhi.

"We learn and respect more concerning team members' culture, traditions and religious beliefs," he said.



# MoF confident of sustainability goals

GLCs will catalyse country’s green initiative moving forward

**PETALING JAYA:** The Ministry of Finance (MoF) is confident that both the public and private sectors will play their respective roles and contribute to the success of Malaysia’s sustainability efforts and goals moving forward.

Finance Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz said it is encouraging to see government-linked companies (GLCs) embrace the sustainability agenda by incorporating environmental, social and governance (ESG) into their core strategies and embedding it throughout their operations and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

“This is really walking the talk on leadership in ESG and sustainability. These GLCs contribute to the mainstreaming of ESG by serving as role models, catalysing change within their respective ecosystems, and encouraging the rest of corporate Malaysia to consider how they behave and how their actions affect the communities and environment in which they operate.

“To other corporates out there, and as the chief executive officer of a regional banking group before, I can assure you that these efforts



*Tengku Zafrul says the government’s position for 2023 remains firm in terms of enabling the implementation of ESG-focused development projects and programmes.*

will not only allow your companies to be more responsible, but will also protect your company’s interests in creating value by mitigating potential environmental and regu-

latory risks.

Tengku Zafrul said the government’s position for 2023 remains firm in terms of enabling the implementation of ESG-focused development projects and programmes.

He added that the ministry has outlined a few key priorities in the Budget 2023 Pre-Budget Statement, including Malaysia’s strategic transition from the current endemicrocovery phase to longer-term reforms.

These, he said, include facilitating better income opportunities and improved holistic wellbeing in order to achieve Keluarga Malaysia’s vision of a more inclusive and sustainable development.

“While these are promising foundations, it cannot be done in isolation. Lasting and sustainable reforms can only be achieved by uniting the entire nation behind a common sustainability vision, with participation from all parties, including the private sector,” he said.

To support longer-term ESG-based aspirations, Tengku Zafrul said the government has planned broad-based strategies and meas-

ures, including strengthening sustainability-related financing and investments, which complements the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by coordinating initiatives and programmes that incorporate ESG elements.

“The MoF’s second main strategy is to empower small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the area of ESG. Given the importance of the sector to the economy, developing the capacity of our SMEs is a key building block to achieving our ESG aspirations and our net-zero goal by 2050.

“The third main strategy is to institutionalise ESG measures. One notable example is the establishment of the Malaysia Sustainable Development Goals Trust Fund (MySDG Fund) earlier this year in collaboration with the United Nations,” he said.

With an initial contribution of RM20mil, he said that this major funding collaboration demonstrates strong commitment to incorporating SDG principles into Malaysia’s national development plans and policies, while also being transparent on the fund’s utilisation.

## Accelerating sustainability and climate action adoption

**SEPANG:** The Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC)’s recent signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the UN Global Compact Network Malaysia and Brunei (UNGCMYB) will further raise awareness, build capacity and increase adoption of sustainability and climate action across the digital economy in Malaysia.

MDEC and UNGCMYB will work together to raise awareness, build capacity and increase adoption across businesses in the digital economy in five key areas.

These include developing a Climate Action Guide and Toolkit for digital economy businesses, to help them take action and to assess their carbon footprint; exploring ways to increase access to chargeable sustainability e-learning programmes for tech small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and promoting freely accessible e-learning resources, including through the Digital UNGC Academy; encouraging digital economy businesses to adopt initiatives that address climate change; promoting sustainable practices among tech organisations to help them achieve sustainable performance; as well as developing and collaborating on outreach and engagement events.

The MoU builds on existing cooperation between both organisations, namely the Malaysia Businesses Sustainability Pulse Report 2022 with MDEC as a partner.

The report, launched on July 14, aimed to gain an understanding of the extent of readiness of Malaysian businesses in adopting, measuring, managing and monitoring sustainability within their respective organisations.

MDEC CEO Mahadhir Aziz said the public-private approach towards championing sustainable actions is imperative and has been made a national development priority as outlined in the 12th Malaysia Plan, which is aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“Sustainability is not a new buzzword, but an important goal that goes hand in hand with the development of a thriving digital economy.

“MDEC, as the lead agency in advancing Malaysia towards becoming a globally competitive digital nation, is fully committed to encouraging the adoption of sustainable practices in the digital economy ecosystem.

“Businesses may find it difficult to translate and relate to SDGs as these goals can appear to be beyond their grasp.

“Part of the efforts following today’s MoU signing is to help provide resources and actionable items that can be adopted by businesses to achieve SDGs,” he said.

UNGCMYB executive director Faroze Nadar added, “The digital economy will be the heart of global development moving forward, hence it will play an outside role in ensuring sustainable development.

“With this partnership with MDEC we aspire that the Malaysian digital economy ecosystem will be a key catalyst for sustainable nation building and as a global contributor to achieving the SDGs.”

# EPF formalising stewardship policy for investee companies

**PETALING JAYA:** The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) is currently formalising a stewardship policy to address investee companies that fail to comply with the environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) standards, said chief strategy officer Nurhisham Hussein.

“In other words, (it addresses) the level of engagement and action we take in case somebody does not comply (with the standards), and I hope we will be able to issue that (the policy) sometime in the next few years.

“At least the people will be able to understand the consequences and the channels that they can use to communicate with the EPF and other big investors on specific issues that need to be addressed,” he said.

Nurhisham said this during the Sustainable and Responsible Investment (SRI) Virtual Conference 2022, titled ‘Preserving the Climate through Sustainable Business and Living.’

In March this year, the pension fund launched the Sustainable Investment Policy, Priority Issues Policies, and Priority Sector Policies to guide the EPF in making informed decisions by integrating ESG standards.

These initiatives are aligned with EPF’s commitment to two overarching sustainable investment ambitions that will guide its overall pursuit of sustainability, namely, to achieve a fully ESG-compliant portfolio by 2030 and a climate-neutral portfolio by 2050, in line with the 12th Malaysia Plan’s aspirations for a carbon-neutral country.



*EPF is formalising a stewardship policy to address investee companies that fail to comply with ESG standards. - FAIHAN GHANI/The Star.*

## ESG strategies to be ramped up in budget

**PETALING JAYA:** The government remains committed to prioritising environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG)-focused development programmes and projects as outlined in the 2023 pre-budget statement, says Finance Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz.

He said these ESG-focused priorities were also key enablers for Malaysia to transition from the

current recovery phase to longer-term reforms as outlined in the 12th Malaysia Plan.

“Thus, Budget 2023 has a sharper focus on holistic development and well-being, facilitated by improved income opportunities for all,” he said in his keynote address at the launch of the Edotco Sustainability Blueprint and Report 2021.

Tengku Zafrul said the govern-

ment would ramp up the implementation of various sustainability strategies and measures under Budget 2022 that would support Malaysia’s longer-term ESG-based aspirations.

He emphasised that lasting transformation can only be achieved when the whole nation – including the public and private sector – rally behind a common sustainability vision.

On the links between sustainability and technology, Tengku Zafrul noted that the information and communications technology sector was responsible for about 3% to 4% of global carbon emissions – twice the size of even the aviation sector.

Much of this was influenced by the recent pandemic and will only increase moving forward, he said.





Orang Asli villagers waiting to get medical treatment at an outpost in Ulu Jelai, Pahang.



Volunteers from Star Foundation working with Insaf Malaysia to build a house in an Orang Asli village in Negri Sembilan in 2019.



Corporate volunteers painting a new house built under Insaf Malaysia to help the Orang Asli in Negri Sembilan own homes.

By FARID WAHAB  
faridwahab@thestar.com.my

RECENT decades saw the Orang Asli village in Sungai Buloh, Selangor, becoming increasingly surrounded by newer developments.

Its proximity to the North-South Highway helped improve accessibility, bringing more traffic through the area that was once quieter.

All these have modernised the lifestyle of the villagers, many of whom have become more integrated with their urban peers.

Despite this, some infrastructures there from roads to digital connectivity are still lacking. The village only received treated water supply two years ago.

Elsewhere in Malaysia, Orang Asli communities, many of which are in remote locations, continue to lag behind in developmental milestones.

The start of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 and the subsequent economic uncertainty raised concerns that their plight has worsened.

Several activists share their views on how to ensure the Orang Asli are not left behind as Malaysia transitions to the endemic phase.

Work with NGOs

Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Buloh's former head Hanim Apeng said the pandemic had disproportionately impacted the Orang Asli communities living near cities.

"Unlike our counterparts in rural areas who can hunt, Orang Asli who live near cities need money to buy food.

"Like the city folk, they too, were experiencing financial pinch and became more reliant on aid from others," she said.

Hanim thanked the many non-governmental organisations (NGO) distributing aid to the Orang Asli during the pandemic.

"I received many requests, especially from people who lost their job and who could not afford to buy the necessities.

"I decided to get in touch with several NGOs, which were very helpful in providing aid to those in need.

"Although there are government agencies that are tasked to assist us, they are often delayed as they must follow various procedures.

"NGOs, on the other hand, have no such restrictions and can channel aid faster to the intended recipients," she added.

# Paving the way forward for Orang Asli

Activists say better infrastructures needed to ensure the community doesn't lag behind in developmental milestones



Ishak says the NGOs need support from the private sector to do their community work.



Hanim says NGOs can deliver aid faster during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Juvita says accessibility to services is a major challenge the Orang Asal communities face.



Dr Chow proposes that NGOs and companies adopt a specific village to better understand their needs.



Youths from Kampung Dayok, Pahang, undergoing DRSforALL's training programme to become a paramedic.

Activist Dr Steven Chow said the private sector and NGOs could adopt a specific village to better understand their needs.

The Federation of Private Medical Practitioners Associations Malaysia (FPMPAM) president pointed to the DRSforALL initiative

that provided healthcare services. "This outreach programme has been on the ground since 2016, supporting the Kampung Dayok community in Ulu Jelai, Pahang.

"It helps to train selected locals to become first responder who are equipped with basic first aid skills.

"Volunteer doctors from FPMPAM also provide support via telemedicine (remote diagnosis and treatment via telecommunications technology).  
"More than 500 patients had benefitted from this initiative that also supplies nutritious food for children of poor families," he added.  
Dr Chow said 33 Kampung Dayok villagers were successfully trained to become a paramedic via the programme.  
"Five qualified candidates also received a scholarship to enrol for a diploma course at a local university.  
"This is to upskill them so that they can work full time in medical clinics, while also providing them with other beneficial training," he explained.  
DRSforALL is a partnership with Health Ministry, with support from the Orang Asli Development Department.  
Insaf Malaysia founder and president Ishak Abd Kadir said support

from the private sector was needed by NGOs in their work to help the Orang Asli.  
He highlighted the "Tampal Rumah" initiative by the organisation, that built houses for the poor in such communities.  
"Since the launch of this programme in 2012, we have built over 350 homes for Orang Asli nationwide.  
"We identify the suitable recipients while the private companies supply funds and manpower in the form of volunteers," he said.  
Star Foundation was among the organisations that had worked with Insaf Malaysia on this programme in the past.  
The foundation is the charitable arm of Star Media Group, which aims to support impactful initiatives to help a diverse group of beneficiaries.

Improve infrastructure

Hanim also wanted a speedy upgrade of network infrastructure



Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Buloh received treated water supply in 2020.

in Orang Asli settlements to ensure they could keep up in the digital age.  
She said their children struggled to follow the classes after schools moved learning sessions online due to former movement restrictions to curb the spread of Covid-19.  
She pointed to her 17-year-old daughter, who had to go outside their home to get better Internet connection to access her lessons.  
"This is despite our village being relatively in a more developed area. Imagine how difficult it is for those in more remote locations?  
"Had the school closure prolonged, more Orang Asli children would have been left behind in education due to poor Internet connectivity," she said.  
Dr Chow said the condition of the road to Kampung Dayok had worsened in recent months and needed repairs.  
"The roads are only traversable by four-wheel drives. The situation is even worse during a downpour," he said.  
This prompted the DRSforALL initiative to build outposts in the area to house paramedics to improve access to healthcare for locals nearby.  
Dr Chow recalled the case of a villager, suffering from severe asthma, who received treatment at one of these outposts.  
"It was 9pm and he had run out of medicines after two months of

the movement restrictions.  
"The nearest healthcare facility was in Kuala Lipis, which was about two hours away and he was running out of time.  
"Luckily, our paramedics were able to administer the appropriate treatment and save his life," he said.  
Ishak, meanwhile, saw a lack of home ownership as a key issue among the Orang Asli that had forced many families to live in the same house for generations.  
He said the government should consider giving special loans to these people to build homes in their respective villages.  
"Many commercial banks are reluctant to approve such loan applications due to the applicants' poor financial status," he highlighted.  
Ishak also stressed that developments should not encroach into the forests which the Orang Asli depended on.  
He cited the opening of new areas in Dengkil, Selangor, which he said adversely impacted many such communities.  
"There were many Orang Asli settlements in the area that many people did not know about.  
"Back then, a huge swathe of land was acquired for development, which forced many original settlers to relocate.  
"The loss of forests meant the Orang Asli could no longer hunt, apart from it disturbing water bod-



Trained paramedics attending to Orang Asli patients at a medical outpost in Ulu Jelai, Pahang.

ies which affected their fishermen," he said.  
In 2019, Insaf Malaysia gave aid to the Orang Asli village in Sungai Buloh, after a pollution incident that disrupted their water supply.  
At that time, that community relied solely on nearby streams for water, which were dirtied due to logging activities.  
Sarawak-based activist Juvita Tatan Wan said accessibility to services remained a major challenge for Orang Asal communities.  
The Tuyang Initiative co-founder said this had an impact on their access to healthcare and education,

a further setback for the communities.  
"Many teachers are not keen to relocate to these rural areas for their placement, due to the high cost of transportation.  
"For example, it costs between RM150 to RM250 just to travel one-way from Miri to Long Moh in Marudi," she said.  
Juvita recalled her late uncle and cousin, who suffered from cancer and heart problems respectively, in Long San, Baram.  
"They had to travel to Miri to seek treatment, which was more than four hours away by the log-

ging road from their village."  
She said the outcome might have been different if they had better access to get treatment more frequently.  
Juvita stressed that the government needed to come up with a comprehensive strategy to uplift the Orang Asal communities.  
"It must not take a one-size-fits-all approach as we may have different challenges compared to the Klang Valley folk.  
"We must understand that these communities deserve equal attention as those in urban areas," she said.



The DRSforALL initiative is an outreach programme that provides medical and healthcare services to the Orang Asli in Kampung Dayok in Ulu Jelai, Pahang.



Compiled by RUBY LIM  
rubylim@thestar.com.my

THE environment around us is not only our home, but it is the reason we are breathing and alive on this planet. Everyone has a part to play in protecting the environment.

Perhaps you are environmentally conscious at home, separating trash for recycling purposes, planting your own herbs or saving

energy like a pro with energy-efficient appliances, which are great ways to live more sustainably.

Why not extend these initiatives beyond your home, by bringing your environmental stewardship to help those in

# Make your neighbourhood a greener place

your community live green lives too?

It is all about habits and actions for everyone to preserve the environment – the thing is, you don't need to look far to make a difference.

Small acts like picking up

litter at the playground and tree-planting goes a long way for not only your local community, but also preserving planet Earth.

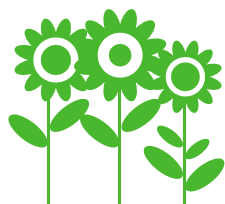
If every neighbourhood starts with a small initiative of its own, the world would be a better place.

Start by getting your community together and lead these eight small ways to make a big impact and transform your neighbourhood into a greener place for all.

## PLANT TREES



Get family and friends to join tree-planting activities around the neighbourhood. When trees grow, they help stop climate change by removing carbon dioxide from the air and releasing oxygen into the atmosphere.



Set an example for others, especially children, by picking up litter when you are at the playground or jogging to maintain the cleanliness of the neighbourhood. You may even want to set up trash bins for convenience in areas where people hang out more often.

Initiate a group recycling pick-up schedule. For instance, set the dates with your neighbours and make arrangements with a recycling service provider for bulk collection from a central location in your neighbourhood. This will encourage those in the neighbourhood to recycle.

## PROMOTE RECYCLING



## SUPPORT LOCAL SELLERS



How does getting fresh groceries from nearby wet markets help the environment? Since it's nearby, less transportation leads to lower gas emission being emitted, while traders will also use less packaging, compared to items at supermarkets.

## CREATE A COMMUNITY GARDEN



Encourage your neighbours to participate in creating a community garden that allows those within the neighbourhood to harvest fruits and vegetables sustainably. You may initiate a community compost programme within the garden as well.



## BECOME A VOLUNTEER

Join associations or groups to raise awareness on environmental conservation. You may even share the knowledge within your neighbourhood group and start activities like beautifying the local park or playground with plants and labelling the plant types for educational purposes.

You Can Help!

