

Star

ESG

ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL GOVERNANCE



The mark of responsible forestry

Seeking Climate Action-focused Support In Budget 2024

What are industries asking for in Budget 2024? Read on to know the outcome of Star Media Group's inaugural ESG Budget 2024 Roundtable discussion

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Supporting the ESG Agenda for SMEs

By DATUK KAMARUDIN HASHIM

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) wield significant influence in shaping the future of the domestic and global economy. In Malaysia, SMEs are the backbone of the economy. More than 97% of all businesses are SMEs, contributing to over 38% to GDP and employing 48.2% of the workforce. These remarkable statistics show that SMEs are a major catalyst in our nation's sustainability agenda.

Some SMEs are integral part of supply chains which has led to growing pressure for them to incorporate environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations into their business.

We are also seeing a growing call for SMEs to demonstrate greater environmental stewardship and social responsibility, driven by the expectations of their customers and suppliers. Today, the business case for sustainable operations is much stronger than ever and will become more intense over time.

The role of SMEs has been afforded greater significance, when our Prime Minister, at the recent announcement of the *Ekonomi Madani*, called for the internationalisation of SMEs. To become one, incorporating ESG into their business will inevitably be non-negotiable.

The Malaysian capital market serves as a pivotal platform to enable SMEs' transition towards implementing sustainable practices.

The Securities Commission Malaysia (SC) paved the way for ESG development when Sustainable and Responsible Investment (SRI) was identified as a key growth strategy in the SC's Capital Market Masterplan 2 (CMP2) launched in 2011.

This was an organic move since Malaysia is a global leader in Islamic finance. Notably, Islamic finance and sustainability share common values. Hence, developing the SRI segment was a natural step for the country.

Continuing on from the seed that was planted under the CMP2, the strategic initiatives under the Capital Market Masterplan 3 that was introduced in 2021, include enabling greater fund flows to all businesses of all sizes and at stages of growth, as well as enabling greater capital mobilisation to businesses that create value for various economic



stakeholders.

Market response has been positive. As of 2022, SRI sukuk issuances total RM18.9bil since the SRI Sukuk Framework's inception in 2014. There are also more SRI sukuk issuances this year related to renewable energy projects and green building.

Since the introduction of the Guidelines on SRI Funds in 2017, the Malaysian SRI funds sector has expanded to RM7.1bil Net Asset Value (NAV) with 58 SRI funds as of December 2022.

Last year, the SC launched the SRI-Linked Sukuk Framework to help companies, especially in hard-to-abate sectors, to raise funds using sukuk structure with features related to the issuer's sustainability performance commitments.

The initiatives, help create a conducive environment for SMEs to transition, and builds on the earlier work done by the SC and the execution of the SC's "5i Strategy".

To "sync instead of swim", SMEs will require multistakeholder effort and ecosystem wide enablers, from deepening awareness and understanding of sustainability risks and opportunities, to enabling access to financing and supporting capacity building.

Innovations in modern financing

In Malaysia, green and social projects are mainly funded through bank loans and bonds or sukuk. However, in practice, few SMEs have the capacity to raise financing through these channels.

Modern financing solutions such as the equity crowdfunding (ECF) and peer-to-peer (P2P) financing platforms have great potential to address this issue. These innovative avenues can help to connect SMEs with more investors by enabling cheaper, faster and more convenient financing options.

Today, MSMEs are increasingly using digital modes to secure capital and financing. In total and up to June 2023, ECF and P2P financing has helped 9,415 MSMEs raise about RM5.4bil. Throughout the years, we have seen MSMEs involved in green businesses successfully raise funds on ECF platforms.

Capacity building is essential

Most SMEs believe that strengthening ESG practices can increase business potential and long-term value. However, only 28% of SMEs have adopted some elements of ESG practices. More needs to be done to increase the awareness among SMEs.

Capacity building is key to achieve this goal. One of the SC's measures on this front is the collaboration with Capital Markets Malaysia (CMM) on the NaviGate series which started in 2021. This initiative aims to promote greater awareness on sustainable capital market financing opportunities. The effort also provides greater business-capital connectivity, fostering a symbiotic relationship that supports economic growth and prosperity. Through the NaviGate series and other events, the SC and CMM have successfully engaged more than 1,000 SMEs.

The SC has also featured sustainability in its InvestSmart events, which promotes investment awareness and literacy. The SME Focus Group under the Joint Committee on Climate Change (JC3), is also a testament to the collective commitment to raise SME awareness and action on sustainability.

Empowering SMEs: Driving sustainable growth through capital markets

The ecosystem is in place and is being continuously strengthened and refined to support our ambitions of a just and sustainable transition. No market or business is immune to the global shift towards sustainable business, consumption and growth.

SMEs' participation in value chains, access to finance and competitiveness will increasingly depend on their ability to measure, report and improve their sustainability performance.



Datuk Kamarudin Hashim is the Securities Commission Malaysia managing director and co-chair of the Joint Committee on Climate Change (JC3).

ESG

in the news

AUG 1

• The clear details and goals revealed under the second phase of the **National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR)** have further affirmed that Malaysia's power sector is on the right track of sustainability and growth.

Citing emerging opportunities from the blueprint, analysts are optimistic that utility companies in the country will be able to expand and enhance their appeal to investors.

AUG 2

• **Solarvest Holdings Bhd's** wholly-owned subsidiary, **Solarvest Borneo Sdn Bhd**, is exploring a collaboration with the Centre for Technology Excellence Sarawak (Centexs), Huawei Technologies (M) Sdn Bhd and Green-Bay CES Sdn Bhd on developing the hyperscale green data centre industry in Borneo.

Under the collaboration, the four parties aimed to promote environmental responsibility by establishing hyperscale data centres that reduce carbon footprints and optimise resource utilisation.

AUG 5

• The current investing focus on ESG and sustainability will likely help the **New Industrial Master Plan 2030 (NIMP 2030)** attract further targeted investments into the country.

"If this strategy works, ESG-conscious companies could be more interested in investing in Malaysia such as Tesla," CGS-CIMB Research said.

• While the NETR is seen as a positive step for Malaysia's low-carbon future, OCBC Treasury Research suggests greater investments and government mandates are needed to support the necessary capabilities and infrastructure for energy transition projects.

OCBC ESG analyst **Ong Shu Yi** highlighted this approach aims to expedite sectoral growth by leveraging the energy transition levels outlined in the NETR, which encompass energy efficiency, RE, hydrogen, bioenergy, green mobility, and carbon capture, utilisation and storage.

• Sarawak will begin commercial production of **sustainable aviation fuel (SAF)** from microalgae next year, and by 2030, the largest state of Malaysia aims to produce 100,000 barrels of SAF per day.

AUG 6

• **Greatech Technology Bhd's** solar panel installation project at its Batu Kawan, Penang Plant 1 (BK1) is expected to see a carbon dioxide avoidance of 25,000 tonnes and the green energy generation of approximately 43,000 megawatt hours in 25 years.

In a filing with Bursa Malaysia, the company said this would be equivalent to 54.6 million trees saved in 10 years.

• The incorporation of sustainable homes and smart features by **S P Setia Bhd** in its upcoming projects is seen as a positive development, and it is expected to give their properties a competitive edge.

Analysts believe that the green and sustainable features, which the developer refers to as iHome, will ultimately appeal to property buyers, with its features that are focused on energy savings, including the smart home sys-

tem, green switch, and solar photovoltaics (PV).

• **Gamuda Land Sdn Bhd**, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Gamuda Bhd, has partnered Engie Services Malaysia to implement solar technologies, energy efficiency and sustainable transport solutions in the property developer's townships.

In a joint statement, the parties said the collaboration will include the development of rooftop solar installations and green transportation infrastructure for the townships of Gamuda Cove in Kuala Langat, Gamuda Gardens in Rawang, and twentyfive7 in Kota Kemuning, all in Selangor, by 2024.

• **Pavilion Real Estate Investment Trust (Pavilion-REIT)**, via its trustee MTrustee Bhd, has inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with five renewable companies to explore the purchase of electricity generated by solar power plants for three malls.

AUG 7

• **Sarawak** is in advanced negotiations with Singapore to supply hydropower via submarine cables.

"State energy unit Sarawak Energy, along with Singapore Power Group and Sembcorp Industries, has completed technical studies on the cables linking Borneo to the city-state," Sarawak premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg said.

AUG 8

• **Yinson Holdings Bhd** is moving toward a green future - and diversifying itself in the process.

Last month, the company signed a deal to secure US\$300mil funding from buyout firm RRJ Capital to part finance an FPSO for Eni Angola SpA that will incorporate green technologies such as hydrocarbon blanketing and carbon capture systems, as part of its goal to build a zero-emissions vessel.

Yinson will also have almost 500 megawatts of RE generation by the end of 2023 and targets to have a gigawatt's worth in a year or two in construction and operation.

• **Tenaga Nasional Bhd's (TNB)** business prospects will be driven by the NETR, under which it stands to gain from incremental fees for the use of its grid and the export of electricity to neighbouring markets.

CGS-CIMB Research said the power utility will also see fresh demand for some 3,500 megawatt (MW) of power from data centres being planted up in the country, helped by the recent establishment of a Green Lane Pathway which aims to expedite time to market for data centres from 36 to 48 months to 12 months.

TNB is also set to see a significant 33% jump in RE generation capacity to 5.3GW in the next 18 months as 1.2GW of RE-based projects come on stream.

AUG 11

• **Sarawak Energy Bhd** has embarked on a pilot 60 megawatt (MW) battery energy storage system (BESS) at its Sejingkat coal fired power plant here.

According to Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg, the BESS will provide critical grid services, such as peak shaving as well as spinning reserve and optimise generation assets to minimise the carbon emissions associated with traditional power generation.

• More incentives for electric vehicles (EVs) are expected to be introduced by the government following the launch of the New Industrial Master Plan (NIMP 2030) and battery electric vehicle (BEV) programme.

AUG 12

• **CIMB Group Holdings Bhd (CIMB)** is raising

its sustainable finance target to RM100bil by 2024 under its Green, Social, Sustainable Impact Products and Services framework.

Group chief executive officer Datuk Abdul Rahman Ahmad said CIMB has seen an acceleration in sustainable finance across the markets it operates in, with the growing awareness and adoption of ESG.

AUG 13

• **reNIKOLA Holdings Bhd** aims to expand its RE portfolio by developing 50 compressed biomethane gas (CBG) projects in Indonesia with a total investment of more than RM1.4bil over the next five years.

AUG 14

• Although Malaysia is ranked mid-range globally in terms of ESG reporting, the country is still considered to be far ahead of its regional peers, says **Grant Thornton Malaysia**.

Its country chief executive officer Kishan Jasani said in certain ESG reporting metrics, Malaysia is even ahead of Singapore and Hong Kong.

• **Petroleum Nasional Bhd (PETRONAS), Gentari Sdn Bhd, Amazon and Amazon Web Services (AWS)** will collaborate on sustainability and decarbonisation initiatives in the accelerated global energy transition.

The collaboration will see, among others, Gentari supporting the decarbonisation of Amazon's India transportation network by working with third-party delivery service partners to further electrify their transport vehicles.

• **CIMB Group Holdings Bhd** continues to gain strong traction on its sustainability commitments and has already met between 22% and 143% of its 2024-2030 targets.

Ahead of its 2024 sustainability commitments, the banking group has mobilised RM60bil in sustainable financing and increased the target to RM100bil, RM150mil in corporate social responsibility initiatives over five years and 100,000 hours a year in staff volunteer activities.

• **The Securities Commission (SC)** is planning to adopt the **International Sustainability Standards Board's (ISSB)** global standards to ensure that sustainability becomes an integral part of local corporations, says chairman Datuk Seri Dr Awang Adek Hussin.

AUG 18

• **Ernst & Young Tax Consultants Sdn Bhd** tax leader for Malaysia Farah Rosley said governance policies should be developed based on the specific profile and circumstances of the organisation as there is no "one size fits all" approach.

For effective tax corporate governance, she said roles and responsibilities need to be determined, and clear protocols and processes need to be in place.

AUG 19

• Chinese waste treatment conglomerate **Shanghai SUS Environment Co Ltd** is looking to inject RM15bil of foreign direct investment into the economy via a collaboration to establish a waste-to-energy (WtE) plant in the country.

It was reported that Malaysian civil engineering group, Citaglobal Bhd, had entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with SUS, which outlines the intention of the parties to potentially collaborate on developing WtE power plants in Malaysia.

• **Sunview Group Bhd's** wholly-owned subsidiary, **Fabulous Sunview Sdn Bhd**, has signed an agreement with United Overseas Bank (M) Bhd to provide installation and management services of solar power systems for local businesses and consumers.

Under the agreement, Sunview will provide services in the development, planning, procurement as well as construction and maintenance of solar photovoltaic systems for commercial, industrial, residential and large-scale solar projects.

• **Genting Plantations Bhd** is on the right track to carve out a sustainable future with its enhanced seed yields and agricultural management solutions, says Maybank Investment Bank Research.

The plantation group is now trading at an unadjusted enterprise value over planted hectare of just RM42,000, making the stock attractively priced relative to other large caps, it said.

AUG 20

• **Yinson Holdings Bhd** together with **CelcomDigi Bhd** to promote and accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in the country.

The collaboration will enable Yinson to leverage on CelcomDigi's network to power up the connectivity for chargeEV, Malaysia's largest charge point operator as well as for rydeEV and driveEV.

• **Bursa Malaysia Bhd** has inked a memorandum of understanding with the stock exchanges of Indonesia and Thailand to explore an inter-regional ESG-linked ecosystem to drive business value creation and sustainable development in Asean.

AUG 21

• **The Local Government Development Ministry (KPKT)** encourages private finance initiatives (PFI) in RE in line with the country's aim to become South-East Asia's RE powerhouse.

KPKT minister **Nga Kor Ming** said the move towards RE is a national mission and the government welcomes PFIs such as the waste-to-energy (WTE) facility built by Berjaya Enviro Parks Sdn Bhd's (BEPSP) at Bukit Tagar Enviro Park (BTEP) which can produce 12MW of RE power.

• **Meta Bright Group Bhd** was granted the exclusive rights to develop solar photovoltaic (PV) systems for **GE Mining Sdn Bhd**, which will establish a 25-year recurring income stream for the former.

Under the collaboration, Meta Bright's wholly-owned unit, **FBO Land (Setapak) Sdn Bhd**, will construct and operate a solar plant with rated capacity of 2,152.80 kWp in Jerantut, Pahang.

AUG 22

• **Sime Darby Property Bhd (SimeProp)** has entered into a strategic partnership with **Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB)** for the exploration and development of sustainable energy initiatives.

• Renewable energy company, **reNIKOLA Holdings Sdn Bhd** will be issuing its second Asean Green SRI Sukuk (reNIKOLA II Green Sukuk), which will also be the world's first climate sukuk certified by the Climate Bonds Initiative (CBI).

In a statement, reNIKOLA said the sukuk will be issued via its wholly-owned subsidiary, reNIKOLA Solar II Sdn Bhd.

• **Kinergy Advancement Bhd (KAB)** will remain committed to sustainability as reflected in its strategic collaboration with Mah Sing Group Bhd and Alliance Bank Malaysia Bhd to foster the adoption of ESG best practices.

The group was chosen to participate in Bursa Malaysia Centralised Sustainability Intelligence (CSI) platform which served as the catalyst that ignited a strategic partnership aimed at empowering supply chain participants, suppliers and vendors to seamlessly integrate ESG practices into their operational frameworks.

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YOUR
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Pathway to net zero

TNB hosted the first Energy Transition Conference with the NETR launch

By JESSIE LIM and ERIC QUAH
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The ever-increasing need to meet the 2030 Climate Pledge, draws closer and Malaysia is gearing up with plans to reach net zero by 2050, as agreed upon in the Paris Agreement 2015.

As the nation strives to fulfil the promise of cleaner renewable energy (RE) sources, there is a need to explore and discuss areas of expertise, solutions and technology related to these decarbonisation efforts.

To address these, a conference was organised by Malaysia's leading provider of sustainable energy solutions, Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) on Aug 28 and 29, as a platform for discussions, forums and exhibitions.

Held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, the Energy Transition (ET) Conference featured industry experts from around the world who addressed issues and strategies, as well as identified potential opportunities along the way.

The conference focused on different areas along the course of the two-day event, covering the future of energy, green mobility, sustainable cities and digitalisation.

In his welcome address at the opening of the conference TNB chairman Datuk Abdul Razak Bin Abdul Majid said, "The approach taken by TNB aims to boost renewable energy capacity, improve energy efficiency using smart technology, promote solar and emerging renewable technologies like hydrogen, ammonia, and storage facilities and strengthen regional collaboration in green energy exchanges for our stakeholders".

Roadmap to decarbonisation

The event also hosted the reveal of the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR) which was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, together with Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli and Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change (NRECC) Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad.

The NETR aims to provide policy clarity in shaping Malaysia as a leader in energy transition among Asian economies by accelerating and navigating the nation's efforts on a larger scale to shift from a traditional fossil fuel-based economy to a high-value green and sustainable economy.

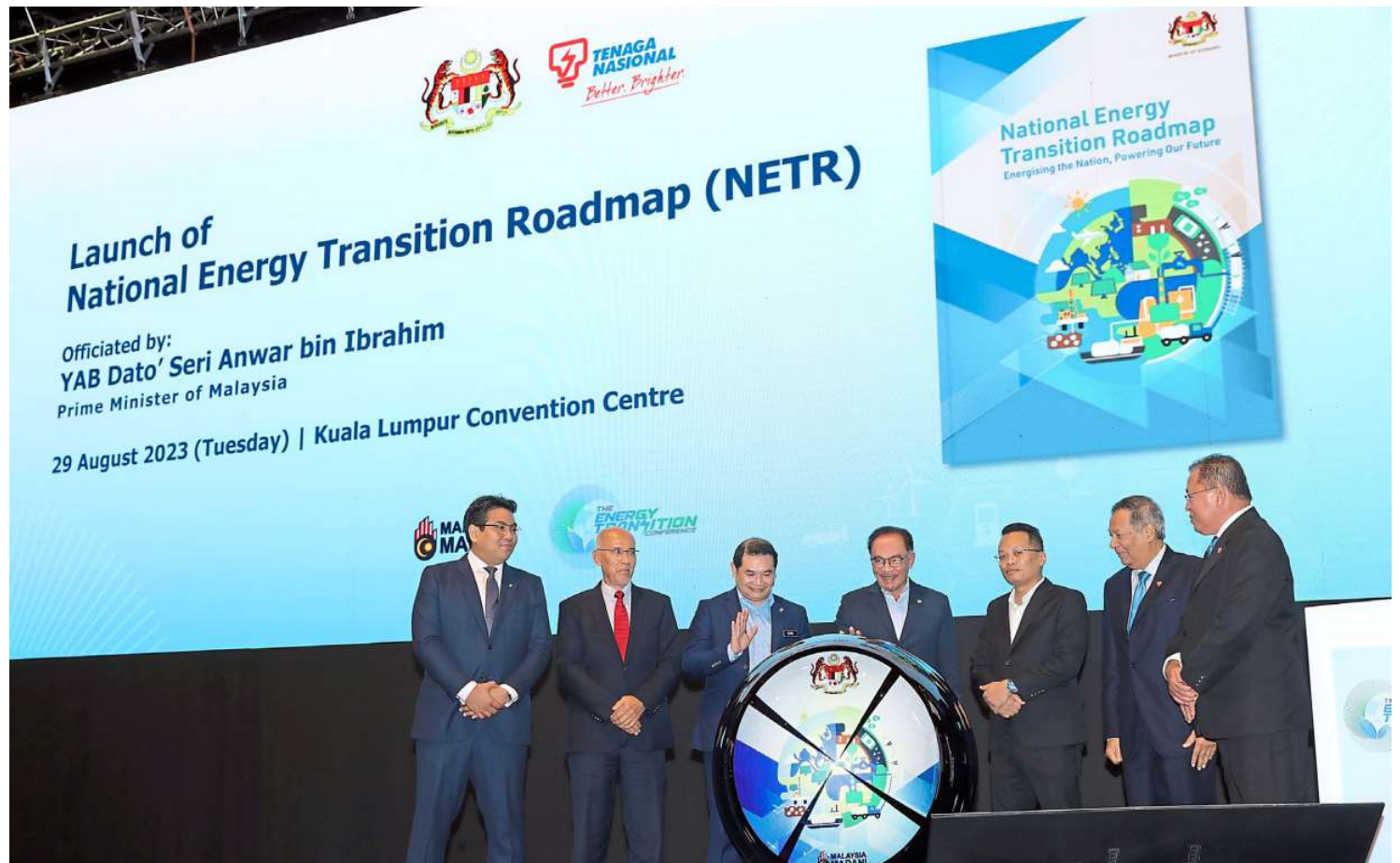
Launched earlier on July 27, the complete NETR version that was revealed on Aug 29 aims to provide policy clarity in shaping Malaysia as a leader in energy transition among Asian economies, by accelerating and navigating the nation's efforts on a larger scale to shift from a traditional fossil fuel-based economy to a high-value green and sustainable economy.

The detail of the roadmap was outlined by Rafizi, who introduced the Responsible Transition 2050—a low-carbon pathway for the energy sector. The pathway intends to unlock the economic value brought about by initiatives and enablers set in the roadmap.

Setting plans in motion

TNB president and chief executive officer Datuk Baharin Din said that TNB has been going full speed in implementing its Energy Transition agenda since the national utility group's net zero aspirations were established in 2021 during his conference's closing remarks and conclusion.

He said the pathway aims to accelerate generation decarbonisation, develop a flexible and cross-border grid, and empower



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim (centre) launching the second phase of the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR) at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. Also present, Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad (third, right) and Minister of Economy Rafizi Ramli (third, left).

cross-sector electrification and prosumers.

What was important for them, Baharin stressed, was balancing the energy trilemma while enabling the nation's economic growth - a plan that fully supports the aspirations under NETR.

"We are ensuring that our grid is flexible enough to accommodate the evolving energy landscape, with plans to invest upwards of RM90bil in the grid over the next six years, out of which, 40% will go to energy transition-related capital expenditure," he said.

On a regional front, Baharin pointed out TNB's aim to strengthen the Asean interconnection with their counterparts, and the resounding commitment to making it happen.

"The interconnection will enable better renewable energy allocation, support system security, and open up a gateway to over US\$6.3tril of new investments by 2050, as projected by the International Renewable Energy Agency."

Pertinent expert viewpoints

Among the many notable contributors to the conference were International Renewable Energy Agency director general Francesco La Camera who sent an urgent message that more need to be done to transition in energy worldwide.

He shared that under the 1.5°C scenario, electricity generation would more than triple from 2020 to 2050. In 2022, around 300GW of renewable power capacity was added globally," he recounted.

However, he pointed out that most climate pledges have not been translated into actionable national strategies and investment remains depleted.

"Fossil fuel investments in 2022 were nearly twice that of renewables, even amidst record-breaking of US\$1.4tril in global investments flowing into renewable projects."

Urging action, which he said should have



TNB chairman Datuk Abdul Razak Bin Abdul Majid and TNB President and chief executive officer (right), Datuk Baharin Din (second left) accompanied the Prime Minister and his entourage to visit the TNB booth during the launch of the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR) at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

been done "yesterday", he said, "we must detect clear roles and possibilities and build a new energy system together."

European Association for Electromobility president Espen Hauge shared that if a nation aims to roll out EV adoption, it would need to do it right away for it takes 10 to 15 years for consumers to start getting interested.

"To get people to start trying, you just have to get them to experience first and deal with [setbacks] along the way because it is harder to find a solution than when you have actually seen it."

Hijas Kasturies Associates principal director Dr Serina Hijas shared that today green buildings are needed to mitigate climate change.

"Greenery can bring down 5-7°C in air temperature as a result of less heating on green space as compared to paved surfaces.

"There is proof of this — we have satellite imaging that tells us that green spaces are

cooler. A cooler environment means cooler buildings, which means less energy."

Chief executive officer of Octopus Energy Group Greg Jackson said that "by using data that knows when electricity is cheapest, customers can control the equipment in their homes and businesses because they can tap into cheap power."

"Technology unlocks the ability to not only provide the service that's cleaner but also more economically efficient. It is a lot more cost-effective."

The discussions and newly formed partnerships at the conference over the two days are deemed critical for collectively advancing toward the nation's Net Zero goals.

They have not only sparked ideas and solutions across the board but also inspired actionable outcomes, which TNB will continue to pursue offline, greatly contributing to the energy transition journey.



Budget 2024: Seeking Climate Action- focused Support

In the run-up to Budget 2024, industries have come together in a roundtable discussion to rally for climate action-focused support in pushing the country's ESG agenda forward

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SMALL and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for about 97% of Malaysia's total businesses, making them the backbone of the country's economy.

This also indicates that large-scale environmental, social and governance (ESG) adoption across the country is also dependent on this segment to accelerate the country's transition towards a high-value green economy, following the nation's pledge to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 in the Paris Agreement.

To achieve this goal, a whole-of-nation approach is required, from federal and state governments and industries to the general public. However, many SMEs have yet to embark on incorporating ESG in their businesses.

Investors incorporating ESG as part of their decision-making, global multinationals cleaning up their supply chain, a shift in customer behaviour to make eco-conscious choices are some of the apparent risks and missed opportunities if SMEs are not ESG-compliant. Star Media Group held its first ESG roundtable discussion to further understand the challenges of businesses in Malaysia - both large and small - in incorporating sustainability into their operations, and how their voices could be heard and considered for the upcoming Budget 2024.

Prior to the roundtable, a survey was conducted with businesses of different sizes and structures to hear the hurdles they faced, and how Budget 2024 can be the answer in the ESG space.

Close to 200 submissions of wish-lists and challenges were collected, which were further verified and checked against existing ESG-related incentives, grants and policies.

It was observed that there were several asks that were already in existence - loans, government incentives and grants. This underscores the inadequacy of current awareness on existing ESG campaigns, training and courses con-



Making history in Star Media Group's chapters with its first ever ESG Budget 2024 Roundtable discussion with a picture: (front row from left) Afendi Dahlan, Liew, Teoh, Koong, Star Media Group chief executive officer Alex Yeow, Mohd Nazrul, Ahmad Hussein, Chan, and Rizal II-Ehzan. (standing from left) Star Media Group chief business officer Lydia Wang, Ng, Star Media Group chief content officer Esther Ng, Tio, Neo, See and Star Media Group financial controller Lim Sui Yuan.

ducted for businesses.

Nonetheless, climate-action focused support was frequently brought to the fore, and that eventually formed the basis of the ESG Budget 2024 roundtable.

This urgency was reflected on a bigger scale as climate change has been at the forefront of the ESG agenda, seeing as we only have 27 years left to become a net-zero nation.

To ensure a broad representation of the industry's concerns and aspirations, participants from across industries were selected for the roundtable, from plantation and manufacturing to transportation and logistics, banking, and business associations.

In attendance were Alliance Islamic Bank Bhd chief executive officer Rizal II-Ehzan Fadil Azim, the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia (ACCCIM) national council member and ESG committee chairman Teoh Kok Lin, DHL Express Malaysia managing director Julian Neo, Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers council member Danny Ng, FGV Holdings

Bhd group chief executive officer Datuk Mohd Nazrul Izam Mansor, Kuala Lumpur Malay Chamber of Commerce president Ahmad Hussein, Malaysia Aviation Group chief sustainability officer Philip See, Malaysia Retail Chain Association deputy secretary general Dr Afendi Dahlan, Malaysia Semiconductor Industry Association director Andrew Chan, PKT Logistics Group chief executive officer Datuk Seri Dr Michael Tio and Solar Harvest Holdings Bhd chief strategy officer Leon Liew.

What was gathered from the roundtable was that while SMEs struggle to onboard ESG principles, larger corporations have already been progressing in their strides to decarbonise.

However, their ability to advance further in their ESG efforts is hindered by various hurdles.

The complexity and scope of ESG, resource constraints, regulatory and reporting compliance, data availability and quality, lack of expertise, and stakeholder management are some of the challenges that businesses are currently facing.

Below is a compilation of what was discussed, collected, and submitted to the Finance Ministry for their consideration in Budget 2024.

Empowering sustainability aspirations of businesses through clean energy incentives

> Significant cost to transition: The transition to adopting clean energy sources comes with a substantial cost which can pose significant challenges especially for smaller enterprises, primarily due to the sizable upfront investments and ongoing expenses involved.

Additionally, the lack of incentives to drive adoption of sustainable clean energy solutions and insufficient infrastructure support has further complicated the clean energy transition. These shared concerns across business sectors highlight the need to address these hurdles, promoting eco-conscious business practices and sustainable energy adoption.

> Commercial EV adoption: A major challenge for companies, especially those embracing com-

mercial electric vehicles (EVs), is the acquisition cost. Commercial EVs are priced at about two and a half times more than conventional diesel-powered vehicles.

As a result, businesses such as logistics companies have to think twice about transitioning to clean energy-efficient last-mile operations, thereby hindering their progress towards adopting commercial EVs and achieving clean energy goals.

> Recommendation: Participants recommend regulating commercial clean energy rates and offering incentives to clean energy providers to boost adoption across industries, making clean energy more financially viable for businesses and encouraging providers to facilitate the transition for a greener, more sustainable business environment.

> Recommendation: To address the challenge of high acquisition costs for commercial EVs, the government can implement effective strategies including direct subsidies covering a portion of the purchase price or fixed amounts, reducing upfront costs.

Additionally, tax benefits and incentives can lower total ownership costs, encouraging businesses, especially logistics companies, to transition to clean energy-efficient last-mile operations. Such measures have proven successful in various countries to promote EV adoption and accelerate the shift to clean transportation.

Balancing green energy goals with grant accessibility

> A question of affordability: Malaysia's renewable energy (RE) targets have advanced from the initial goal of 45% to an ambitious 70% by 2050, further reiterating the government's commitment in its journey towards net zero. Zooming in on solar energy, presently it constitutes 25% of our energy mix, with a 2025 target of 31%.

Although achieving this goal seems manageable, the issue of affordability might slow down business clean energy transition.

Integrating intermittent solar power into the grid requires grid infrastructure upgrades and battery storage integration are necessary developments but would inevitably

incur additional costs on top of the energy generation or production expenses.

The affordability of the clean energy transition hinges on incentives, subsidies, and economic capacity which in turn might impact businesses willingness to shift from the dependence on conventional energy sources to green alternatives.

The slowing down of businesses embarking on clean energy transition due to rising costs concerns poses risks to derail Malaysia from realising its 100% clean energy ambition.

> Streamlining grant disbursement: The challenges linked to grant programmes are multifaceted. They encompass complexities in the application process, potential misuse, limited accessibility, and unclear eligibility criteria.

Despite their intent to offer financial relief, grants might not adequately align with specific industry requirements, resulting in less-than-optimal outcomes.

Furthermore, uncertainties surrounding grant disbursement and

utilisation can impede businesses' ability to strategise and execute sustainable initiatives effectively.

> Recommendation: To implement targeted grants to make renewable energy adoption more affordable and drive businesses to exceed the 25% renewable energy threshold. Grants fund clean energy projects, creating a comprehensive support system for entities committed to greater renewable energy adoption.

> Recommendation: To effectively address challenges in grant programmes, it was proposed to establish a centralised agency to manage sustainability grants, streamlining processes with clear guidelines. A monitoring and evaluation system enhances transparency and resource allocation.

Additionally, an online platform for guidance and updates simplifies the process for businesses. This multifaceted strategy aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of grant management, ensuring funds are utilised optimally and aligned with specific industry requirements.

"The roundtable session provided a holistic and 360 degree perspective, representing inputs from all relevant ESG stakeholders."
Andrew Chan, Malaysia Semiconductor Industry Association

"I believe that recognition and incentives by the government will spur sustainable practices, enhancing the nation's standing in the ESG arena."
Mohd Nazrul, FGV Holdings Bhd

"The roundtable allows us who are representing a wider audience of the business community to brainstorm, debate, and discuss a series of relevant topics and challenges with progressive suggestions to be considered."
Julian Neo, DHL Express Malaysia

"By working together, the government and corporate Malaysia can help to create a more inclusive and sustainable economy, reduce Malaysia's reliance on fossil fuels, and enhance Malaysia's competitiveness."
Rizal II-Ehzan Fadil Azim, Alliance Islamic Bank Bhd

"Less red tape, more transparency as well as promoting a more fair and open competition landscape will help to push the ESG agenda forward much more effectively."
Leon Liew, Solar Harvest Holdings Bhd

"There is an uneven state of readiness within the business community in which SMEs are seen as less prepared than large corporations when it comes to ESG adoption. Clearly this gap must be addressed holistically as if it's not managed well, it can potentially disrupt the entire supply chain leaving many SMEs overwhelmed by the multitude requirements set under ESG principles."
Afendi Dahlan, Malaysia Retail Chain Association

"ESG is our mission to save the earth in line with the UN SDG Global Goals' clarion call to improve the planet and quality of life by 2030, hence should be a collective effort between Corporate Malaysia and Government in bolstering efforts to address these goals."
Michael Tio, PKT Logistics

The importance of centralisation to guide businesses in ESG

> Lacking in knowledge and direction: Businesses, especially SMEs, face several challenges in advancing their ESG practices and sustainability initiatives. These challenges include a lack of motivation due to inadequate understanding of ESG risks and opportunities, difficulties in establishing clear strategic focus, and confusion in policies arising from the many roadmaps and plans.

> Lack of a central governing agency: The absence of a central ESG governing body hinders progress and KPI measurement, leaving businesses grappling with evolving ESG standards. Additionally, limited ESG data poses challenges, particularly for SMEs, further impairing their decision-making and decarbonisation efforts.

> Recommendation: To implement education and awareness initiatives, with a focus on SMEs, in a bid to enhance their understanding of ESG risks and opportunities.

Promote the positive impact of ESG compliance on business growth and sustainability at the same time establishing more accessible online resources, workshops, and training programmes to guide businesses in ESG compliance and decarbonisation.

> Recommendation: To advance ESG practices, establishing a dedicated regulatory body is crucial. This central authority would guide, enforce, and monitor ESG standards across industries.

Additionally, a centralised platform should aid businesses especially SMEs in crafting customised ESG roadmaps. Moreover, promoting partnerships with research institutions and industry associations can yield a robust ESG database for informed decision-making.

Anticipating an impactful Budget 2024


The recommendations put forth encompass various strategies to facilitate the transition to a greener and more sustainable business environment. This includes regulating clean energy rates, subsidising commercial EVs, centralising grant programmes, and ESG education to promote sustainability and decarbonisation while boosting economic advantages for businesses.

With the recent introduction of the government's aspirations such as the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR) and New Industrial Master Plan 2030, we look forward to hearing more of its commitment in furthering the ESG agenda in Malaysia through the upcoming Budget 2024. It will no doubt bring us one step closer to achieving clean energy whilst fostering economic resilience in the years ahead.


Moderator of the roundtable, ACCCIM treasurer Datuk Koong Lin Loong, too, hopes that Budget 2024 would also prioritise the integration of ESG that contributes to industrial growth.

"Ultimately, this will result in infrastructure and economic development that can boost Malaysia's competitiveness on a global scale in the long term."


When Commercial & Industrial Sectors Go Solar




How do businesses benefit from harnessing solar power?




Reduce carbon footprint



Meet ESG commitments



Reduce overhead costs as less power is bought from a utility company.



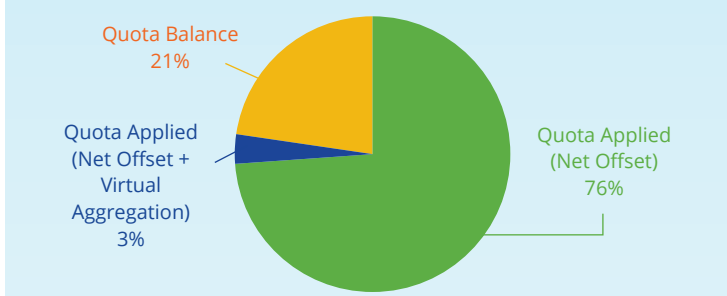
Reinvest electricity bill savings back into the business

Solar Savings under NOVA

- Commercial and Industrial businesses can leverage the **Net Offset Virtual Aggregation (NOVA) programme** under the government's Net Energy Metering (NEM) 3.0 scheme to export any excess solar energy produced back to TNB.
- The value of exported energy shall be credited to the account of the NOVA Consumer. It would then be used to offset the following month's electricity bill.
- To date, 21% of the 800 MWac NOVA quota* is currently available on a first come, first served basis before the end of 2023.

NEM Nova

Quota Balance: 166 MWac
Quota Applied: 633 MWac (as of 22 Sept 2023)

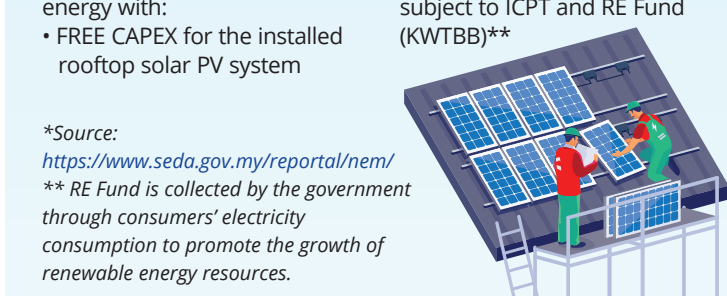


Category	Percentage
Quota Balance	21%
Quota Applied (Net Offset + Virtual Aggregation)	3%
Quota Applied (Net Offset)	76%

Cleaner and Cheaper Energy at Zero CAPEX

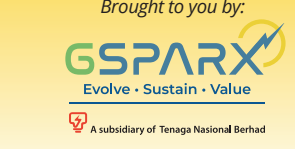
Under the Zero CAPEX business model from GSPARX, Commercial and Industrial customers can enjoy solar energy with:

- FREE CAPEX for the installed rooftop solar PV system
- FREE maintenance fees for a fixed contract period
- Bill savings from a fixed solar tariff, which is not subject to ICPT and RE Fund (KWTBB)**



*Source: <https://www.seda.gov.my/reportal/nem/>
** RE Fund is collected by the government through consumers' electricity consumption to promote the growth of renewable energy resources.

Brought to you by:



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For more information about solar solutions for businesses, visit <https://www.gsparx.com/Packages/Commercial>



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The main street in the cosy township of Eco Grandeur was filled with lights and pop-up stores in conjunction with #AnakAnakMalaysia campaign, which were also partially powered by EVs.



EV enthusiasts also got the chance to check out the Tesla light show. The Electric Vehicle Gathering was coordinated by one of EcoWorld's sustainability partners, Aurizn.

By **CHOW ZHI EN**
ESGeditorial@thestar.com.my

Inspiring sustainable living amongst M'sians

One developer strives to cultivate communities for a greener future

ENVIRONMENTAL, social and governance (ESG) values are not just for the corporate world. In all actuality, these values have been part of the very fabric of our lifestyles for generations without much glitz or glamour. More often than not, they reflect a deep-rooted connection with nature, a strong sense of community and steadfast commitment to ethical governance.

EcoWorld, renowned for its dedication to these principles through their design philosophy, is on a mission to not only incorporate them into their developments but also share them with the communities they've built.

Enter the annual #AnakAnakMalaysia (#AAM) campaign that unfolded on Sept 9 and 10, hosted at EcoWorld's largest township – Eco Grandeur in Puncak Alam, Selangor.

Except, for this year, it was a vibrant partnership with platform curator Rihuh to introduce residents of Eco Grandeur and the surrounding communities to sustainable living as a lifestyle choice.

In case you missed it, EcoWorld's #AAM campaign has been an annual tradition that has been celebrated in conjunction with National Day and Malaysia Day since 2015. Initially conceived to instil patriotism and unity among Malaysians, #AAM has evolved to become much more than wristbands and unity walks.

Nine years on and post-pandemic, #AAM2023 fully embraced the idea of supporting local businesses and actively participated in positive changes that contribute to a more circular world. It's a bold statement of the growth of the campaign and EcoWorld's mission to make a lasting impact as community builders and not just developers.

This year's theme focused on the fusion of action and generation with #ActionGreeneration, embodying the spirit of taking concrete steps towards a brighter and more eco-conscious tomorrow, beginning at home.

#ActionGreeneration embodies the spirit of collective action and change – an open invitation to inspire others to unite, work together and contribute to improving quality-of-life while embracing the values of ESG.

'Jom rihuh'

At the heart of the campaign lies the EcoWorld Pledge Tree, whereby participants were invited to join the movement by making a simple yet impactful green promise.

Although it's a symbolic gesture representing a commitment to create a better tomorrow, the pledge was filled with small, accessible and actionable steps for the public to take on.

From a simple pledge of fixing water leaks to installing solar panels on your roof, initiatives like this allow parents to also show their kids small things and (sometimes) immediate things they can do to be more sustainable.

The event also offered a multitude of eco-friendly and family-friendly activities, including a bike generator juicer, a wooden playground, and a massive set of wooden *congkak* and other traditional toys, as well as eco-themed workshops.

Another standout feature this year was the Ketuk-Ketuk Festival by Rihuh, a first-of-its-kind electric vehicle-powered green bazaar featuring over 40 vendors – all of which showcased and sold a diverse array of eco-friendly products, encouraging sustainable living practices within the township.

Some sustainability partners, including Yinson GreenTech, SisaLab and Arus Oil, had set up booths to promote sustainable living and provide valuable insights into eco-conscious practices.

They also held the first personal electric vehicle (PEV) challenge in the country, dubbed the Electro Blitz with hopes to encourage micromobility adoption. In collaboration with Malaysia Speed Festival, the race was flagged off by Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye as the chairman of #AnakAnakMalaysia.

Meanwhile, enthusiasts of electric vehicles and speed got to enjoy the Electric Vehicle Gathering Festival which featured an exciting Tesla light show.

The two-day events were also capped off with live performances by local artists such as Leaism, HelloLuqman, Angel X Rocksta, Liesl-Mae, Khodi, Amrita Soon, Wan Sin Hoe and Site Specific Dance.

A wider impact

Waste reduction was a prominent theme of the #AAM2023 campaign as EcoWorld partnered with local recycling initiatives to create awareness about responsible waste disposal.

One aforementioned sustainability partner Arus Oil, for instance, conveniently collects used cooking oil from households and businesses for recycling.

This way, EcoWorld offers its residents an option they can use for themselves to not only make a little cash but also educate the public on proper used-oil disposal.

And to bring those ESG values nationwide, #AAM2023 ran concurrently at other EcoWorld Galleries in Iskandar Malaysia (Johor) and Penang.

However, the developer's vision is not just about constructing eco-friendly townships – it is also about creating sustainable communities that reflect the harmony

between humanity and nature that's deeply rooted in Malaysian culture.

Recognising the importance of social responsibility, EcoWorld prioritises green spaces within their projects, preserving natural landscapes and creating lush parks that encourage social interaction and community bonding.

This emphasis on community well-being mirrors the deeply rooted Malaysian values of togetherness and caring for one another.

Not only that, the EcoWorld Gallery, nestled within their developments, serves as a hub for educating visitors about ESG principles.

It is more than just a space; it provides insight on EcoWorld's journey through the values that have shaped the developer for what it is today.

It is here where visitors can gain knowledge into how EcoWorld integrates various specific UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) into their townships, creating a living testament to the harmony between nature and humanity.

As EcoWorld's townships continues to evolve and mature, the developer's commitment to ESG values remains unwavering.

They understand that building a sustainable future is not just about constructing eco-friendly buildings but also about nurturing a culture of sustainability within society.



The Electro Blitz PEV challenge was flagged off by #AnakAnakMalaysia chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye around 8pm on the first night of the festival on Sept 9 at the bike park within Eco Grandeur itself.



(From left) Eco World Development Group Berhad deputy CEO Liew Tian Xiong, #AnakAnakMalaysia chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye and EcoWorld Green Council chairperson Liew Tian Wei kicked off the EcoWorld Pledge Tree by hanging their pledges on the tree.

By LEE CHONGHUI

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WHAT would happen if all trees were to disappear? Life as we know it will cease to exist.

Without trees, planet earth would dry up leading to extreme droughts, disastrous floods, and massive corrosion.

These incidents would wipe out habitats, biodiversity, disrupt supply chains, reduce food availability, ultimately resulting in the extinction of life on earth.

Trees absorb 7.6 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere every year, according to research published in Nature Climate Change in 2021.

However, mankind's greed and propensity to accumulate wealth has led to incessant logging, mining and agricultural expansion — depleting forests which are regarded as the world's best "carbon sinks".

To counter this act of greed in Malaysia and realise the nation's greening agenda, the Malaysian Palm Oil Council (MPOC) has taken upon itself to help build a sustainable future through restoration of degraded and destroyed ecosystems.

"The abilities of trees to withstand harsh conditions, adapt to surroundings, and thrive against all odds are symbols of hope and resilience amid extreme environmental challenges.

"Tree-planting serves as a tangible representation of MPOC's commitment to a healthier planet, a sustainable future, ecological restoration, and a legacy of environmental consciousness," says MPOC.

Upholding long term commitment

In June 2019, MPOC kickstarted its "Forest Rehabilitation of Orangutan Habitat at Lower Kawag, Ulu Segama Forest Reserve" programme which aims to rehabilitate degraded areas by planting fast growing indigenous or dipterocarp species to enhance wildlife habitat - especially the endangered orangutans.

The programme's goal is also to reduce carbon, improve air quality, reduce flooding and soil corrosion, support and enhance biodiversity, as well as boost wellbeing of the locals.



Reforestation is touted as the world's best solution to combat climate change.

Planting the nation

The Malaysian Palm Oil Council (MPOC) is devoted to building a greener, healthier planet for a sustainable future

As part of the government's Greening Malaysia agenda by planting 100 million trees across the country, MPOC's ten-year initiative — conducted by the Malaysian Palm Oil Green Conservation Foundation (MPOGCF) - is also in line with the nation's target to become a net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions nation as early as 2050.

Entering its fifth year of operations, the reforestation project is still going strong.

When the project was launched,

MPOC and its project partner — the Sabah Forestry Department (SFD) — identified 2,500 hectares in Lower Kawag, part of Ulu Segama-Malua Forest Reserve in Lahad Datu as degraded forest due to over-logging and forest fire.

Currently, over 225 hectares out of the 2,500 hectares have been sowed with fast growing indigenous forest species and native fruit trees such as Pulai, Laran, Telisai paya, and Bayur among others.

Terap and Fig trees, which make up orangutans diet, have also been planted as part of MPOC efforts to conserve and protect forest biodiversity in the selected area as it is an important wildlife corridor to many species including the endangered Bornean pygmy elephant and the Bornean orangutan.

As of today, more than 90,000 trees have been planted on the 225 hectares area. The third phase of the project, which will kick start this year (2023) will cover 700 hectares of area with the aim to plant 300,000 seedlings of various species.

Optimistic of the project's progress, MPOC hopes its efforts will leave long lasting impressions on the local community, wildlife, and Malaysia as a whole.

"Our actions of planting trees may contribute to positive changes and perhaps drive others to initiate

tree planting activities on a larger scale.

"MPOC believes that we can create change through action as we all continue to strive to restore, conserve, and preserve our lush greenery we've been blessed with."

Helping nature and its inhabitants

Reforestation calls for precise plans and measures as poor execution could increase carbon dioxide emissions - harming biodiversity, the ecosystem, landscapes and livelihoods in the long run.

Putting local people and communities at the heart of reforestation projects is central to generating lasting positive outcomes. Yet, this crucial factor is often overlooked in tree-planting projects.

In view of this, MPOC has made it a priority to engage with local communities and establish strategic plans to ensure successful execution and longevity of its initiative.

Aside from preserving the forest landscape, the council's meticulous strategy offers 64 locals from Kampung Tampenau an opportunity to be part of the meaningful project which also helps them protect their homeland while generating additional income.

Planting materials for MPOC's "1 Million Forest Trees Planting" pro-

gramme are sourced from the local community as a corporate social responsibility initiative.

Villagers collect seeds during mass fruiting season from the forest reserve area which is later germinated and raised in a domestic nursery established right by their home.

Meanwhile, wildings are also collected and raised for up to 18 months to be ready for transportation and transplanting at the project site.

The SFD has also been organising workshops to educate and train villagers in seed germination and raising high quality seedlings to avoid hiccups in the execution process.

Seedlings and wildings, which have been traded according to the prevailing and agreed rates by both parties, are then planted in small blocks that have been identified by surveyors according to natural features of river networks and terrain.

They are planted in a zig-zag formation, 5m by 5m apart from one another to minimise damage by Bornean pygmy elephants which regard the project site in Lower Kawag as their foraging ground.

"By embracing the role as environmental stewards, MPOC advocates for a greener, healthier planet as well as a sustainable future for ourselves and future generations."



MPOC advocates for a greener, healthier planet for all life on earth as well as a sustainable future for future generations.

CLIMATE Governance Malaysia (CGM) held its inaugural National Climate Governance Summit (NGCS), a transformative three-day event aimed at empowering small-medium enterprises (SMEs) with crucial insights and knowledge to navigate the challenges and seize the opportunities presented by the climate emergency.

The inaugural National Climate Governance Summit took place from Sept 5 to 7 this year and had been jointly curated and organised with Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM), FIDE FORUM (Bank Negara's network of financial institution directors), representatives from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), SME Corporation Malaysia and the Institute of Corporate Directors Malaysia.

The summit saw physical and virtual attendees attend throughout the three days. Furthermore, all sessions were recorded and made available on the CGM website and media channel post event.

Present at the event was Regent of Pahang Tengku Mahkota Tengku Hassan Ibrahim Alam Shah Ibni Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah, Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change (NRECC) Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, CGM chairperson Datin Seri Sunita Raiakumar, SSM chief executive officer Datuk Nor Azimah Abdul Aziz, and Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) assistant governor Abdul Rahman Abu Bakar.

In his opening remarks, Nik Nazmi said that biodiversity and cli-

Inaugural National Climate Governance Summit in M'sia focuses on resilience

Experts share insights for SMEs to navigate climate emergency



The first day of the summit, on Sept 5, was graced by Regent of Pahang Tengku Mahkota Tengku Hassan Ibrahim Alam Shah (centre), joined by (from left) SSM CEO Datuk Nor Azimah Abdul Aziz, NRECC Minister Nik Nazmi, CGM chairperson Datin Seri Sunita Raiakumar and Bank Negara Malaysia assistant governor Abdul Rahman Abu Bakar.

mate change are intrinsically linked, and cannot be ignored.

"We have adopted pragmatic, progressive, and long-term development strategies that recognise the intrinsic value of our natural heritage.

"Key among these strategies is

the alignment with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), an international commitment aimed at reversing the decline in biodiversity. This framework, adopted during the 15th CBD COP15 in 2022, emphasises ambitious goals and global col-

laborative action," he said.

Addressing this, he said that several policy initiatives are being considered including: conservation education, strengthening legal frameworks, research and data sharing, support for indigenous communities, climate adaptation strategies, investment in green technologies and international cooperation to address transboundary conservation issues.

This event aimed at bringing together a diverse array of more than 100 local and foreign subject matter experts who shared their expertise and experiences through carefully curated panel sessions and workshops in climate governance, sustainability and other related issues.

The discussions centred around crucial topics such as decarbonisation, environmental conservation, biodiversity preservation and the promotion of a just transition.

"We understand that SMEs are a critical component of the Malaysian economy,

comprising 97.4% of all businesses in Malaysia and contributing 38.4% of the GDP. Without getting SMEs on board, any climate or sustainability ambition will be undermined," said CGM in a statement.

A comprehensive, carefully considered, multi-pronged approach is required to enable SMEs to smoothly decarbonise and increase their climate resilience.

"We are in an environment where key stakeholders, including capital markets regulators, as well as allocators of capital such as investors, bankers and insurers, are demanding increased reporting and disclosure from businesses so that informed decisions can be made about the allocation of capital to businesses, industries, countries and regions," it said.

CGM emphasised that SMEs need to understand how to identify climate risks, then measure and mitigate the impacts such risks as well as seizing opportunities which are arising in the climate crisis.

The urgency of addressing the profound risks associated with the climate crisis has spurred a global multi-stakeholder response, compelling both public and business sectors to take proactive measures.

Recognising the paramount role of SMEs in the Malaysian economy – comprising 98.5% of all businesses and contributing 36.6% of the GDP – the summit marks a pivotal moment in fostering climate resilience within these vital sectors.

TO further empower women, Futuremakers by Standard Chartered and Mereka Innovative Education (Mereka) have introduced the Women in Entrepreneurship (WiE) Programme to equip local women-led organisations with essential business acumen.

The launch of WiE was officially inaugurated by Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development Ministry (MECD) deputy secretary general (policy and monitoring) Noor Afifah Abdul Razak on Sept 11 this year at Mereka Space, Publika Shopping Gallery in Kuala Lumpur.

Open to women-led organisations based in Malaysia with a minimum viable product (MVP) and a clear business model, the programme comprises webinars and pitching sessions, with a highly competitive selection process that will shortlist only 20 teams to participate in the bootcamp.

In addition, the top five winning teams will receive seed funding from a pool of US\$100,000 and undergo a six-month dedicated mentorship programme, where they will receive guidance and support from experienced mentors in the entrepreneurship fields.

"We believe that women entrepreneurs have enormous potential to drive economic growth and innovation in Malaysia. Through this programme, we want to provide them with the necessary tools, resources, and guidance to build successful and sustainable businesses. We are hopeful that our current partner-

Investing in dreams: \$100k seed fund empowers women entrepreneurship

Futuremakers by Standard Chartered and Mereka join hands to support Women in Entrepreneurship Programme



(From left) Mereka project director Farhana Mohd Noor, Biji-biji Initiative and Mereka group chief executive officer Rashvin Pal Singh, Biji-biji Initiative chief executive officer and Mereka director Juliana Adam, Ministry of Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development (MECD) deputy secretary general (policy and monitoring) deputy secretary general Noor Afifah Abdul Razak, Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia chairman Datuk Yvonne Chia, Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia Brand & Sponsorship, Impact and Community Engagement head Mastura Adnan, Standard Chartered Saadiq Malaysia chief executive officer Mohd Suhaimi Abdul Hamid, and Standard Chartered Malaysia Corporate Affairs, Brand and Marketing head Geraldine Tan.

ship with Mereka will drive more opportunities for women entrepreneurs as they look for growth beyond the Covid-19 period, where more than 176,000 entrepreneurs

nationwide were forced to close their businesses.

"Since 2020, Standard Chartered has committed US\$25mil to support youth-focused economic recovery

projects as part of Futuremakers by Standard Chartered, with the Standard Chartered as the lead delivery partner for all Futuremakers projects," said

Standard Chartered Saadiq Malaysia chief executive officer Mohd Suhaimi Abdul Hamid.

"We are thrilled to be partnering with Futuremakers by Standard Chartered and Mereka on this initiative. Women entrepreneurs face unique challenges in accessing the support and funding they need to launch and grow their businesses. "WiE is designed to address these obstacles by providing women entrepreneurs with access to essential resources and mentorship. By supporting women-led businesses, we can not only help them unlock their full potential, but also drive positive change and economic growth in communities across Malaysia.

Moreover, by empowering women entrepreneurs, we can help close the gender gap in entrepreneurship and promote gender equality in our society," said Biji-biji Initiative chief executive officer and Mereka director Juliana Adam.

Applications for the WiE Programme are now open, and interested teams can apply via the Women in Entrepreneurship official website at <https://wie.mereka.my/>.

Compiled by CHOW ZHI EN
ESGeditorial@thestar.com.my

THE International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste (Sept 29) – designated by the United Nations (UN) – serves as a platform to address critical food loss and waste challenges that affect our environment, economies and our society.

When food decomposes in our landfills, it releases methane – a potent greenhouse gas that accelerates the effects of climate change. Not to mention the environmental impact of the food supply chain when it comes to producing, transporting and processing wasted food puts added pressure on our ecosystems and increases our carbon footprint.

Last year, *The Star* reported (June 6) that the amount of food thrown out was slightly less than the 17,041 tonnes per day

recorded in 2020.

Based on the latest data from the Solid Waste Management and Public Cleansing Corporation (SWCorp), “people in Malaysia generated 17,007 tonnes of food waste per day in 2021.

“Most (76%) were inedible like bones and fruit skin, while the remaining 24% could still be consumed like leftover meat and vegetables,” according to SWCorp.

Economically, about one-third of all food produced globally is lost or wasted, translating to billions of dollars lost annually. These inefficiencies disrupt trade, investments and

employment opportunities, affecting food security during times of need.

In the 2022 Global Hunger Index, Malaysia ranks 58 out of 121 countries, with a score of 12.5 indicating Malaysia has a level of hunger that is moderate. Keep in mind, this figure isn't disaggregated either.

A more responsible approach to food consumption aligns with social values by advocating for the fair allocation of resources and the reduction of unnecessary waste through a whole-of-nation approach.

Food for thought

Tackling food loss and waste as one nation



Food redistribution programmes

Establishing food redistribution programmes that connect surplus food from businesses and farms with organisations that serve vulnerable populations can significantly reduce waste.

Organisations like Food Aid Foundation, Pasar Grub and SESO save surplus food and donate them to the needy.

Some other organisations even work with large companies to turn their food waste into compost for some extra returns on the side.

Similar government initiatives can be supported through tax incentives or subsidies.

Portion control

As an individual, you can start with being mindful of portion sizes and reduce the likelihood of leftover food being thrown away.

A great way to tackle this is by meal prepping or having a set shopping list so you don't overstock on groceries.

This practice not only curbs impulsive purchases but also ensures that you buy only what you need, reducing the likelihood of food waste.

Support for farmers

The government can provide support and resources to farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices that minimise post-harvest losses.

This might also involve training farmers in proper harvesting and storage techniques, providing access to modern equipment and offering financial incentives for reducing waste.

For instance, the government has allocated RM86mil to the Agriculture and Food Industries Ministry (Mafi) to support sustainable agriculture efforts and another RM1bil in funds has been provided via the Bank Negara Malaysia Agrofood Financing Scheme to improve farmers' productivity.

Separately, RM250mil had also been set aside for the Agrovest Investment Programme by Agrobank to fund agricultural start-ups using modern technology.

First-in, first-out

We've all forgotten that one orange in the back of the fridge and only found it when it has become mouldy.

When unpacking groceries, place newer items at the back and older items at the front. This encourages using older items before they expire and aids in better inventory management.

Understanding labels

Familiarise yourself with date labelling terminology such as “best before” and “use by”.

Understanding these labels helps prevent unnecessarily discarding food that's still safe to eat.

Some foods may also last longer than you expect when they're stored correctly in air-tight containers.

Food loss and waste are complex challenges, but they also present opportunities for positive change.

As we observe the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, let's remember that our choices matter and only together can we reduce waste, ensure food security and protect our planet's future.

