

STARBIZ TODAY

Towards higher CPO production

Hap Seng Consolidated Bhd group MD Edward Lee Ming Foo says it intends to enhance the level of crude palm oil and palm kernel production by increasing its planted land bank. Today's CEO Outlook also features Boustead Holdings Bhd group MD Tan Sri Lodin Wok Kamaruddin, who is looking into opportunities where investment into biofuel and biodiesel can complement the value chain. **>B4/5**



Shamsir Jasani business boost

Accounting firm Shamsir Jasani Grant Thornton managing partner Datuk N.K. Jasani says it aims to increase its business by 20% following its merger with JB Lau & Associates. **>B4**

Interest in SunInfra stake

Several parties are interested in taking over the 36.16% stake held by Sunway Holdings Bhd in Sunway Infrastructure Bhd (SunInfra), according to the latter company's chairman, Tan Sri Jeffrey Cheah. **>B7**

Cosco S'pore to expand capacity

Cosco Corp Singapore Ltd says it is seeking to expand capacity in China and South-East Asia as demand rises for moving raw material, fuel and consumer goods. **>B10**

P&G strives to improve quality of children's lives

Its Open Minds campaign helps special children



By **EUGENE MAHALINGAM**
eugenicz@thestar.com.my

THINK Procter & Gamble (P&G) and the first thing that comes to mind is its range of household, food, beauty and healthcare products.

But beyond gratifying consumer demand with its brand and products, P&G also strives to improve the lives of people through various channels, such as its humanitarian, educational and corporate responsibility (CR) efforts.

One of its many CR efforts is its "Live, Learn and Thrive" programme. An ongoing initiative for many years, its goal is to champion the development of children in need.

According to Procter & Gamble (M) Sdn Bhd (P&G Malaysia) public affairs manager Zaidil Hanief Mohamad Zaidi, a similar CR effort exists in Malaysia.

"We have a CR initiative to cater to the needs of 'special children', i.e. children with learning disabilities primarily under 13 years of age," Zaidil told *StarBiz*.

Called "Open Minds", it is an extension of P&G's global "Live, Learn and Thrive" initiative.

"We target children who are intellectually challenged and who may suffer from autism, dyslexia, cerebral palsy or Down Syndrome, for example," he said.

This group was chosen as P&G Malaysia felt that they were the most vulnerable and least able to help themselves, he said.

"Furthermore, we want to create awareness among Malaysians that we should embrace these children as part of our society because to an extent, learning disability is a concern for all," he added.

Initiated in 1999, "Open Minds" is a corporate philanthropy effort where P&G Malaysia would contribute funds to schools and centres nationwide that looked after special children.

In return, the centres and schools



Zaidil Hanief Mohamad Zaidi with the honourable mention plaque

are required to furnish P&G Malaysia with a progress report on the children they are looking after. Scholarships are also given where necessary, according to Zaidil.

By 2004, P&G Malaysia had given about RM4mil to nearly 60 schools and centres under this campaign.

At end-2004, the company began organising activities among its employees to further its cause to help special children.

Among the activities were a tennis charity event, a mini fashion show and a "climbathon" challenge. P&G Malaysia raised RM2mil, courtesy of its employees.

At the moment, P&G Malaysia is working closely with the Education Ministry and a special committee that comprises teachers, parents and experts on children with learning disabilities.

"P&G Malaysia came up with a special Education Blueprint, whereby we have presented to the ministry 10 special points (or initiatives) that we plan to implement to further help

these children," Zaidil said.

Currently in the works is a "model school framework", under which P&G Malaysia would spearhead the construction of special purpose facilities in schools that would benefit special children.

P&G Malaysia recently contributed RM250,000 to construct a room with "fancy bright lights" at Sekolah Kebangsaan Putrajaya Presint 9(2).

Called a "Snoezelen Room", it is designed to deliver stimuli to various senses using lighting effects, colour, sounds, music and/or scents.

Such a room provides better stimulation for those who would otherwise be almost impossible to reach via normal verbal communication, according to Zaidil.

"Children who suffer from dyslexia or autism see and understand better through pictures than words," he said.

"We will construct more such facilities there until it personifies our concept of a model school. We then hope to replicate this framework at other

schools nationwide," Zaidil said.

P&G Malaysia's efforts have not gone unnoticed. At the recent Prime Minister's CSR Awards 2007, the company received honourable mention for its initiatives in the Committee and Social Welfare category.

An honourable mention is given to the second and third placed competitors in a particular category. There were over 90 competitors for the category that P&G Malaysia participated in.

"It is not just about getting recognition. What is important is that we reach out (to these children), make a difference and create public awareness," Zaidil said.

Moving forward, he assures that P&G Malaysia would continue to promote the betterment of special children in Malaysia.

"Throughout the years, our methodology may have changed but our target and cause will remain the same. We will continue with our corporate philanthropy and the blueprint with our partners," he said.

Quarry products price rise bodes well for Minetech

PRICES of quarry products in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur have been revised from Jan 1 to reflect the prevailing demand and supply.

For example, the price of aggregates – the base material for concrete, mortar, roadstone and asphalt premix – has increased to RM18 to RM19 a tonne, excluding transport cost, from RM15 previously.

The increase is a reflection of the expected surge in demand, given the present upcycle in the local construction sector, thanks to the implementation of the Ninth Malaysia Plan and the various economic corridors.

Minetech Resources Bhd, being the country's second largest quarry operator, is set to benefit.

NEWS ANALYSIS

YEOW POOI LING

lingyp@thestar.com.my

"Requirement for aggregate from infrastructure projects will push up prices and this will help our bottom line," managing director Loh Yee Kwan said after the company's EGM yesterday.

As a result, revenue was expected to grow by 10% to 20% for the year ending Dec 31, 2008, he added. Minetech had anticipated the boom two years ago when it laid down plans to expand production.

This year, its two new quarries –

one each in Manjung, Perak and Kuantan, Pahang – will start operations, bringing total capacity to 14 million tonnes a year.

The company is also on the lookout for quarries in the northern and southern regions of Peninsular Malaysia.

Loh said Minetech could buy existing quarries or set up a new one. While the former is more expensive, it will give immediate presence instead of a greenfield site, which takes up to two years to build before operations can start.

He noted that earnings in the past two years were eroded by rising cost of diesel, which the company could not pass on to customers as the contracts did not have the fluctuating

clause.

However, Minetech was gradually resolving the issue by including the clause in contracts that were being renewed, he said.

The company also has overseas operations as the quarry in Karimun, Indonesia supplies to Singapore.

Loh said the city-state was experiencing a construction boom thanks to plans to set up two integrated resorts.

Meanwhile, in China, it would be another three months before Minetech received a permit from the authorities to operate the Heng Li Quarry under the 20-year sales and marketing contract with Huizhou City Xin Rong Gravel & Aggregates Engineering Ltd, he added.

Star Biz

EDITOR: Yap Leng Kuen

CONTACT:
email: starbiz@thestar.com.my
tel: (03) 7967 1610
fax: (03) 7955 4039
mail:

StarBiz
Menara Star Publications (M) Bhd
15 Jalan 16/11 46350 Petaling Jaya

ADVERTISING:
Phua Yen Li
ylphua@thestar.com.my
(03) 7966 8245