

SLDB's five-year plan to be the No 1

Alex Ong

KOTA KINABALU: The Sabah Land Development Board (SLDB) has embarked on a five-year plan to make it the best government agency in the food-based industry in the State, said its Chairman Datuk Abdul Ghani Yassin.

Abdul Ghani, who is also Nabawan Assemblyman, said: "SLDB is a statutory body under the Chief Minister's Department entrusted to implement Sabah's rural development programmes and develop state land, mainly via land development and re-settlement scheme.

"Our vision is to be the catalyst and best government agency in food-based industry in the State with the main focus to transform and improve the wellbeing and uplift the standard of living in rural areas, especially to our 6,675 stakeholders or settlers under our schemes.

"In the next five years, we will also focus on strengthening SLDB group's financial position," he said.

Abdul Ghani, who has served as SLDB Deputy Chairman from June 2004 until Aug 2014, said he also planned to optimise and increase revenue in order to pay better dividends to its stakeholders.

"SLDB will also not forget its role in helping to eradicate poverty and as such, we will ensure the wellbeing of our stakeholders are taken care of and their income is above the poverty line.

"I also want to ensure that all SLDB subsidiary companies are progressive, innovative and self-sustain and profitable," he said.

Abdul Ghani said the current SLDB management has done tremendous improvement within the span of less than three years.

"But having said that, there are few things that have to be improved further and there are always room for improvement. The next thing to do is to re-strategise our core business to be self-sustained and able to meet the industry standard



SLDB plans to increase revenue to pay better dividends to stakeholders. (Inset): Abdul Ghani.

and State Government's expectation," he said.

He said SLDB was structured to compete with other agencies in rural land development programmes without compromising the overlapping mandate and financial aid from the State Government.

"SLDB knows the importance of diversifying its socio project activity to stay relevant and to contribute to the company's growth. In view of this, SLDB has identified other crops such as coconuts, pineapples and ginger to generate better return.

"We had started pilot projects in Papar, Nabawan and Tenom to grow pepper and coffee. We are looking for short-term crops such as pineapples and ginger to be cultivated in these areas to generate additional income for our stakeholders.

"Apart from fruit plantations, we are currently also engaging in rice packaging and our focus is to supply rice to the local market," he said.

Abdul Ghani said there are five poverty eradication programme within SLDB's

domain involving 6,675 participants and settlers. This five programmes are known as-

- i. Program Pekebun Kecil Berkelompok
- ii. Program Pekebun Kecil Terancang
- iii. Sewa Pajakan (Leasing)
- iv. Projek Geran Komunal
- v. Mini Estate Sejahtera KPLB

"These programmes concentrating on palm oil plantations are giving returns to our stakeholders. At the same time, this will bring modernisation of infrastructure such as roads and buildings, application of fertilisers and the usage of quality vigorous oil palm seedlings to produce maximum yield.

"Apart from that, we have initiated another programme 'Aktiviti Ekonomi Tambahan' (AET) which is focussed to provide extra income to chosen participants and settlers as a group. This programme can provide between RM300 and RM800 additional income per month to them.

"This AET programme will benefit the household income since the economic

spillover generates jobs and opportunities for future entrepreneurs among them.

"We also have Projek Perumahan Rakyat Termiskin (PPRT) as a corporate social responsibility (CSR) and we targeting between 50 and 60 units to be repaired per year. So far, we have implemented on 63 units of houses in Tongod and Sandakan.

"Program Pembangunan Bersepadu Ekonomi Kampung (Prospek) is another project focusing on holistic development of a particular area which includes three main components - economic, housing and infrastructure. This project has already taking off since last year in Tongod and will be benefiting 1,022 participants and SLDB will implement the same Prospek project in the near future at Kota Marudu and Nabawan," said Abdul Ghani.

He said in line with the 'Inisiatif Pelan Pembangunan Sabah Maju Jaya 2021-2025', which was launched by Chief Minister Datuk Seri Panglima Hajiji Noor, SLDB will be implementing 14 projects which will take into consideration of the 'Infrastruktur, Ekonomi dan Kesihatan dan Kesejahteraan Rakyat'.

"This project will be benefiting 15,000 people," he said.

Abdul Ghani said SLDB will assist farmers to market their agriculture products more effectively and will start off by strengthening SLDB's marketing unit.

"We also plan to build 'Pusat Pengumpulan Produk Pertanian' in Sandakan, Tawau and Keningau. The main function of these collection centres is to assist our participants and settlers to market their agriculture products and serve as 'Pusat Pembangunan Agro-prenuer'.

He said SLDB will also create more job opportunities, especially among Sabahan youths and hope to recruit local talents, emphasising on 'Anak-Anak Peneroka or Peserta'.

Abdul Ghani said in order to have a healthier cash flow, SLDB will implement

efficient collection system by ensuring prompt collections from mills, dividend income and other sources of income.

"On the other hand, efforts have to be intensified to achieve cost efficiency. This is vital as to ensure continued development can be implemented without any leakages. This is in line with this year's budget theme of 'Pembangunan Berterusan, Perbelanjaan Berhemah dan Berintegriti'.

Abdul Ghani said SLDB is also exploring the idea of going into the planting of "Pisang Sabah."

"There is potential in Pisang Sabah as part from exporting to Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and China, we can also go into downstream like Keropok Pisang etc.

"The mandate given to me to lead SLDB is to ensure a smooth and productive journey towards achieving our vision and mission. It is my aspiration not only to improve the livelihood of all participants, smallholders and settlers but also to improve the infrastructure in line with the Industrial Revolution 4.0.

"SLDB will act as the catalyst to bring them out of the poverty line and ensure they benefit from the development of the State under the 'Sabah Maju Jaya' Blueprint.

"It is my hope that the top management and staff of SLDB will work together as a team with high spirit and integrity to bring SLDB to greater heights," he said.

Abdul Ghani said the Covid-19 pandemic badly impacted SLDB to the core.

"Last year we only achieved 87 per cent of our budgeted crop due to closure and hindrance of some of our estate operations. Our development also stunted to only 55 per cent due to inability to commence development.

"Nevertheless, it is not going to stop us from pursuing our development agenda as we are now able to cope with it in ensuring minimal impact to our business operations," he said.