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Shell focuses on education

It believes educating the young is key to supporting efforts to save rainforests

EUGENE MAHALINGAM

Corporate responsibility (CR) is practically second nature to Shell Malaysia. As chairman Datuk Saw Choo Boon explains, the company has always been committed to sustainable development.

"We see CR as a way of conducting our business. We have always incorporated sustainability considerations into our business thinking and operational processes," he told *StarBiz*.

"Running alongside our business is an aim to ensure better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come," he said, adding that community development, education and environmental conservation have always been a prime focus for the company.

Shell Malaysia has organised and supported a significant number of rainforest-related environmental conservation projects in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

In Sabah, it has worked with the Government and various non-government organisations and contributed considerably to rainforest conservation initiatives such as the Danum Valley and Maliau Basin.

However, the heart of its conservation efforts lie in education, as the company believes that the key to the sustainability of its efforts to save the rainforests is in educating the young.

»If we are not seen as a company with values, we are not seen as one that is responsible. We cannot sustain profitability if our focus is only on making money«

DATUK SAW CHOO BOON

"Over the years, Shell Malaysia has developed various programmes to teach young Malaysians to develop a sense of care for the environment," Saw said.

In the peninsula, the company has collaborated with the Malaysian Nature Society and the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia to start the Nature Education Centre (NEC) in Kuala Lumpur.

"The NEC conducts programmes for children to help them better understand the importance of environmental conservation."

"It is open to the public and parents are encouraged to enrol their children in the pro-

grammes.

"Nature education camps for students are also run in Sabah and Sarawak through the support of various Government agencies," Saw said.

Another environmental education initiative is its SERASI (Sarawak Anugerah Sekolah Rakan Alam Sekitar) awards, aimed at promoting environmental awareness among students in Sabah and Sarawak.

The awards also give recognition to the schools for their efforts in promoting environment programmes.

Saw said Shell Malaysia has also been sponsoring Malaysian students in their pursuit of higher education for over 45 years.

"Education is a very important area of focus for us, because we believe that training and learning help people to develop their potential.

"Our scholarships and bursary awards have benefited more than 10,000 young Malaysians since the 1950s," Saw said.

Many of the scholarship recipients were either working at Shell or have gone on to become leaders in Government and business, he added.

A significant educational initiative is Shell Malaysia's "Project LINK," a programme dedicated to the training of welders and carried out in collaboration with the Sabah and Sarawak governments and the Education Ministry.

"To date, over 700 students have graduated from this programme to serve as welders in the oil and gas industry as well as various other industries," according to Saw.

On how CR has improved Shell Malaysia, Saw said: "We feel it is part of our duty to be responsible. If we are not seen as a company with values, we are not seen as one that is responsible.

"We cannot sustain profitability if our focus is only on making money. Otherwise our existence will be very shortlived. The fact that we have been around for 117 years is a testament to that."

One of the company's community driven programmes is the 'Shell Traffic Games', an annual nationwide competition promoting road safety awareness among school children.

"This event has been around for over 50 years. Road safety continues to be a major concern in this country.

"The only way to inculcate good habits and practices is to start with the young.

"We feel that by instilling good road safety habits from young, it becomes second nature to them," Saw said.

In a typical competition, pupils from participating schools are required to pass a written test and an on-the-road test. They are awarded merit points for abiding by road safety regulations. They are also issued summonses should they violate any law.

Shell has also worked with the Government to promote road safety during festive seasons.

