

# Focus on 'green' recovery

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From Page One

"Becoming more sustainable also differentiates your businesses, creating value and brand reputation and goodwill," the minister said.

In Brunei, 97.3 per cent of Brunei enterprises are MSMEs, he added. Dato Seri Setia Dr Awang Haji

Mohd Amin Liew shared that embedding sustainability into business practices "does not have to include a costly overhaul of existing processes", provided that it is done intelligently by developing a sustainability programme in line with the organisation's financial viability.

"Do remember that no matter the

size of your business, never underestimate the impact you can make. Saving the world will not happen overnight but you can start now by making small, sustainable changes in your business ecosystem," he said, urging participants to explore and explore initiatives to get others to do the same.

Prior to delivering the closing keynote speech, the minister advised local MSMEs to explore opportunities for growth beyond the Sultanate's borders.

"This is an opportunity to share what we all have done as a country, both private and public sectors, and how we can continue to work together to improve our economy and to create more jobs for our future generations."

The SME360 Series was first launched by BIBD in January 2022, as part of the SME 360 brand refresh, building the brand equity for these services, strengthening their role as service providers, and extending the relentless support towards the MSMEs.

The SME360 provides a strong and engaging platform with a network of stakeholders, counterparts, and experts to share best practices, discuss common challenges and identify opportunities to build back stronger in a sustainable manner.

At the forum's opening session earlier, BIBD Acting Managing Director

and CEO Hajah Noraini binti Haji Sulaiman shared that the SME360 series has managed to cover 10 different sectors, with more than 1,683 attendees participating in the series, along with 153 speakers and 11 moderators, representing 142 organisations.

Sharing the feedback received from attendees, 99 per cent have said that they see value in organising the forum as a regular event, with 91 per cent rating the session excellent or above average.

In view of the overwhelmingly positive feedback, Hajah Noraini said BIBD is committed to continue the SME360 Series as a regular event, to allow local businesses to look forward to the series as a fixed programme in BIBD's calendar.

Echoing the sentiments in the minister's closing keynote, Hajah Noraini also urged small businesses to look into how they can integrate sustainability principles and practices within their business culture, and understand the emerging opportunities and relevant to MSMEs.

She said, "Throughout each forum, the theme 'Building back stronger and more sustainably' has resonated constantly to highlight the fact that actions by businesses, corporate clients, as well as individuals are crucial to ensuring that we can pass on a planet that is livable and sustainable to our children, their children and our future generations."



Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Minister of Finance and Economy II Dato Seri Setia Dr Awang Haji Mohd Amin Liew bin Abdullah speaks at the forum. PHOTO: SIM YH

## Curtains down on BIBD SME360 Series

Hakim Hayat

Bank Islam Brunei Darussalam's (BIBD) SME360 Series came to a close yesterday, with a session discussing 'Vision and Leadership in the New Frontier', and a closing keynote delivered by Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Minister of Finance and Economy II Dato Seri Setia Dr Awang Haji Mohd Amin Liew bin Abdullah.

The SME360 Series finale themed 'The New Frontier', aimed to encourage a lively discussion on the greatest lessons throughout the series of forums and strategies for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to prepare for the new business environment in the post-pandemic world. The sessions also looked at the importance of SMEs in carrying out responsible practices, and outlined the national vision for SMEs.

The 10-part SME360 Series has been running since January 2022, featuring two industry highlights every month, aimed at gathering thought leaders and industry experts from nine main business sectors across the Sultanate in engagement sessions with business owners and stakeholders to discuss the challenges, best practices, perspectives and opportunities to come back stronger.

According to BIBD, the SME360 Series will be taken up as a regular yearly event as part of the bank's efforts to continue supporting local enterprises navigate current issues, opportunities and latest developments in the business arena.

The closing session featured a

high level discussion on factors affecting Brunei's business outlook in 2022 and beyond, especially with the re-opening of borders, inflation, supply chain disruptions and staff shortages in the wake of COVID-19.

The panellists at the session featured Permanent Secretary (Economy) at the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE) Dr Hajah May Fa'ezah binti Haji Ahmad Ariffin, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Darussalam Enterprise (DARE) Daniel Leong, Head of Corporate Relationship Management at BIBD Andy Lim, Adjunct Professor at Universiti Brunei Darussalam School of Business and Economics and Founder of Shazali & Partners Haji Shazali bin Dato Haji Sulaiman, and President of the Young Entrepreneurs Association of Brunei (YEAB) Nurliyana Fatin binti Ariffin.

The panellists also discussed new realities and challenges in the new frontier, and explored their visions for a more prosperous SME community and the roles that SMEs play in contributing to the economy.

Earlier in the day, the opening session featured reflections in adaptation, innovation and resilience as well as the greatest lessons learned from the SME360 Series. The panel speakers comprised Head of Structured Finance at BIBD's Corporate Banking Group Abdul Azim bin Haji Mohammad, Director of Strategy and Operations at Hoco Agency Josh Lew, co-founder of Gong Cha and Bake Culture Nicky Wong, and Tourism Development Department Acting Director Salinah binti Haji Mohd Salleh.

Among the topics discussed were best practices, solutions and experi-



Panellists engage in discussions during the forum. PHOTOS: BIBD



ences in terms of human resources, innovation and business development, communications, adaptations as well as advice to SMEs on cashflow and how to avoid potential pitfalls. The panellists looked back on the SME360 Series to highlight their biggest takeaways from the various sessions, and the lessons that each speaker could take from COVID-19.

Also included during the morning session was a discussion titled 'Why Responsibility Matters', exploring the question: why doing good is good for business? The panellists also discussed the role that businesses play in contributing to

sustainability and environmental solutions, as well as the steps that business operators can take in order to practice sustainable leadership.

The panel members were Head of Corporate Digital and Business Development at BIBD Haji Shamri bin Haji Mahali, founder of Agrome IQ International Dr Vanessa Teo, and General Manager of BUE and Managing Director of Asia Pacific Central, Curecrete Distribution Chris Yong.

Also joining the discussion were a youth leader for Brunei Council on Social Welfare and mentor for Girls for Girls Brunei Natasha Halim and Founder of EnEvo Siti Norasyidah binti Haji Kariya.

The SME360 Series was held as part of BIBD's support for Economy Week organised by the MoFE at the Brunei Mid-Year Conference and Exhibition 2022 (Brunei MYCE 2022).

BIBD Group said that their strategic vision is aligned with Brunei Vision 2035, and through its sustainability framework, the bank aspires to complement the government's efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) by creating a holistic plan that contributes towards lasting economic growth, community empowerment, healthier lifestyles and more environmentally conscious production and consumption.