

Telling our green growth story

The Malaysia pavilion at Expo 2017 is a chance to show the nation's green credentials to the world

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DESPITE an increasingly connected and online world, face-to-face interactions are still indispensable in this day and age. This is especially true of the gargantuan gatherings at world fairs, which originated in Europe as an outcome of industrialisation.

In 1851, London hosted the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations at The Crystal Palace, touted by some as the first world's fair. In 1889, Paris hosted an Exposition Universelle (World's Fair) to mark the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution.

Since then, the world has seen more than 100 of such large scale fairs, including Expo 2015, which took on the theme "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life", and Expo 2016, a horticultural exposition at Antalya, Turkey.

Next Saturday, Kazakhstan will open its doors to the world as it welcomes people to Expo 2017 at Astana, its capital city, which will run until Sept 10.

Astana's journey to Expo 2017 began in November 2012, when the city was chosen by the Bureau International des Expositions – the intergovernmental organisation regulating world expos, since 1931 – as the venue for Expo 2017, marking the first time that an exhibition of this stature is being hosted by a country from the former Soviet Union (Kazakhstan declared independence from the Soviet Republic in December 1991).

Astana edged out Belgium's Liege, its sole competitor, by proposing "Future Energy" as the expo's theme.

For Malaysia, Expo 2017 represents a great opportunity to show off its green credentials to the global business community, as more than 115 countries will be participating in this event that is expected to draw more than three million visitors.

"We have an unprecedented opportunity over the next three months to prove to the world that green growth is in our nature, and that the best way to create a green future is with Malaysia," said Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili as he unveiled

how the country will approach the high-profile event.

"As a nation, we have become an emerging market model, and we need to use that leadership to prove that an emerging market can drive positive change towards future energy," he said in a recent briefing on Malaysia's approach to the expo.

"We will all be putting our best forward at Expo 2017 to make our nation proud. Our delegation is backed by a nation that has a plan for a green future. That plan is working, backed by our resolution as a nation to deliver a high-income nation that is inclusive and sustainable.

"This is the confidence our delegation can have as we look forward to Expo 2017 with the opening of our pavilion on June 10," said Dr Ongkili, adding that "our business matching platform will be open until Sept 10.

"Malaysia is ready to showcase our best practices, innovations, solutions, technologies, and strengths in green energy to the

world through the Malaysia Pavilion, which has been designed to reflect our theme of 'Powering Green Growth'."

The 727sqm pavilion would not be possible without support from corporations and the private sector. The "title sponsor" is Tenaga Nasional Bhd, with other main sponsors including Gas Malaysia Bhd, ItraMAS Corporation Sdn Bhd, Helios Photovoltaic Sdn Bhd, Mudajaya Group Bhd, Gading Kencana Sdn Bhd, Perfect Food Manufacturing Sdn Bhd (manufacturer of Julie's Biscuits), and Puro Board Sdn Bhd.

As energy is the focus of Expo 2017, it is natural for the Energy, Green Technology and Water Ministry to take the lead, while the implementing agency is the Malaysian Green Technology Corp (GreenTech Malaysia), which comes under the ministry.

Other agencies that provided content for the pavilion include the Sustainable Energy Development Authority of Malaysia (a statutory body under the ministry that manages the implementation of the feed-in tariff mechanism to spur

the development of renewable

energy), the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (under the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry), and the Energy Commission (which is responsible for regulating the energy sector, specifically the electricity supply and piped gas supply industries in Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah).

Other supporting agencies include the International Trade and Industry Ministry, the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation, the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry (Mosti), the Malaysia Bioeconomy Corporation (under Mosti), Tourism Malaysia, Culture and Arts Department, and the Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation (better known as Kraftangan Malaysia).

Culture and tourism content has been included in the Malaysia pavilion to sell the softer aspects of the country, such as its natural beauty and multicultural society.

As such, other than hosting activities that promote trade and business as well as serious discussions on "future energy", the Malaysia pavilion will also feature social

activities such as cultural performances, demonstrations, and concerts.

Energy, Green Technology and Water Ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Dr Zairi Ujang is the pavilion commissioner, while his deputy is Datuk Loo Took Gee, his predecessor at the ministry who now serves as an adviser.

"As unity has been the hallmark of Malaysia for the past 60 years, we are working hard to ensure the over 150 Malaysian entities that will be participating in Expo 2017 will be armed with a consistent set of facts that provide the necessary confidence boost to ensure we stand out as a green energy leader.

"If we collectively work hard to tell the same facts about Malaysia's green story, our successes will shine through, and we will become known to the more than 100 other nations participating in the expo as a nation that is 'Truly Asia' and truly powering green growth.

"The numbers prove it. We are the world's second best emerging market at providing electricity to businesses, and eighth best among

all nations, both developed and emerging," said Dr Ongkili, who added that eight global solar photovoltaic (PV) manufacturers have made Malaysia their manufacturing destination.

"In fact, four of the world's top five largest producers continue to trust Malaysia for its pro-business policies and relatively green infrastructure. And the World Bank has recently published data that showcase our commitment to a green future.

"They have benchmarked the world's leading nations on percent-

age of forest cover. For emerging markets, we are number one, and fourth among the world's top 100 economies, behind only Finland, Sweden, and Japan. That is very nice company to keep."

However, Dr Ongkili added that Malaysia is not about to prattle on endlessly about its green credentials at Kazakhstan, as it is fundamentally more interested in steering the conversation towards genuine sustainability.

"We want to inspire a global conversation about Future Energy, and about creating a green future. We will pose a simple question, Watt IF (#Wattif, a play on "What If?"), and ask corporations, governments, and the people to help us inspire

the world towards a green future."

Malaysia is also hoping to create buzz through another social media campaign based on the notion that small actions can collectively lead to significant changes or impact, a phenomenon also known as the Butterfly effect.

"The #MyButterflyEffect hash tag is our call to action for all Malaysians to inspire the world for a green future. One small action in the form of a social media post can cause a large effect in another place, and this is what we plan to accomplish."

Follow the Malaysia pavilion at Expo 2017 in Astana, Kazakhstan, at greenfuturemalaysia.com or at facebook.com/EXPO17Malaysia.



Country beauties: A art installation in Astana last year celebrating the countries participating in the Expo 2017. — Reuters



Dr Ongkili: 'We have an unprecedented opportunity over the next three months to prove to the world that green growth is in our nature.' — Bernama