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Pernas wants to earn more forex for nation

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DIVERSIFIED group Pernas International Holdings Bhd plans to expand its total oil palm cultivated areas and is also placing its travel agents overseas so as to attract more foreign exchange to Malaysia in the light of the recent weakening of the Malaysian currency.

Chairman Tunku Tan Sri Shahrizan Tunku Sulaiman said Pernas will be increasing its total cultivated areas for oil palm by 10,000ha to 30,000ha.

With the boost in exports of oil palm, Malaysia will be able to earn more foreign exchange which will help to strengthen the local currency, he added.

Through its subsidiary Tradewinds (M) Bhd's plantations division, Pernas has a total oil palm cultivated area of 21,362ha, with total hectareage of matured oil palm at 13,566ha, during the financial year ended January 31 1997,

Commodities like palm oil, natural rubber and tin are currently enjoying favourable profits and prices following the sharp appreciation of the US dollar. In the first week of this month, the price of palm oil has reached RM1,600 a tonne.

Tunku Shahrizan said he will be writing a letter to the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohammad expressing the group's intention to help the country to earn more foreign exchange.

Pernas, he added, has also bought two shoplots in London which will house its travel agents to promote Malaysia, which should now become a more attractive tourist destination, due to a lower ringgit as compared to the other major currencies.

The latest budget, said Tunku Shahrizan who spoke to reporters after the official sales launch of Bandar Seri Putra over the weekend, also augurs well for the tourism industry.

On another issue, Tunku Shahrizan said Pernas will be developing serviced villas with DBS Land of Singapore in Bandar Seri Putra, a township currently being developed by Pernas' associate company United Malayan Land Ltd (UMLand).

"We have successfully negotiated an agreement for the sale of 14.99ha in Bandar Seri Putra to DBS Land of Singapore, which will develop the prestigious serviced villas along the same concept as Stamford Residences that have been implemented in Singapore, Jakarta and elsewhere in the region," said Tunku Shahrizan who is also the chairman of UMLand.

In a separate statement to the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange on Saturday, UMLand stated that the land was sold for RM46.84 million.

Pernas will hold a 40 per cent stake in the service villa project. Submission for the necessary approvals to the relevant government authorities will be made soon, Tunku Shahrizan added.

Meanwhile, UMLand on Saturday launched the first phase of Bandar Seri Putra, consisting of 200 units of low cost houses, 58 bungalows, 3-storey and 4-storey shopoffices, as well as 119 units of bungalow lots.

The company has forecast profit and revenue of RM20 million and RM60 million, respectively.

Chief executive officer of UMLand Datuk Ng Eng Tee said the company, which has bought the land at a reasonable price, has anticipated a tight 1998 Budget for the property sector and thus have priced its units accordingly.

Furthermore, he added, most of the materials used are sourced locally and will not be affected by the increase in tax.

In the country's latest budget, import duty on construction materials such as tiles, marble, iron will be increased from between five per cent and 25 per cent to between 10 per cent and 30 per cent.

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