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High hopes for agro-forestry development in New Hanover

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The launching of the Central New Hanover Agro-forestry Project last month signifies a move towards development in one of New Ireland province's least developed areas – New Hanover. And Tutuman Development Ltd (TDL), a nationally owned company, is behind the move with its investor partner, Joinland (PNG) Ltd.



Pedi Anis and Deodatus Hii in unity for agro-forestry in New Hanover

TDL Chairman Pedi Anis said the launching of the Central New Hanover agro-forestry project is one of its major achievements in stimulating socio-economic growth in the area.

There has been lack of socio-economic development on New Hanover island, notably in Central New Hanover, since the country gained independence, and this agro-forestry project will help build and sustain the economy of the

area in the long term, said Mr Anis.

During the launch, which was witnessed by hundreds of villagers, leaders from the New Hanover community, landowners and officers from the provincial administration described the initiative as a historic occasion. Many said it has been a dream come true.

Many of the speakers and landowner representatives praised the investors and development partners for their involvement and commitment in the project. The companies are also involved in promoting the Danfu agro-forestry project in the Namuh area of Namatanai district in which cocoa is the main crop being developed.

Mr Anis, a former Premier and senior public servant, said there are plans also to bring development into other areas of New Hanover and similar agro-forestry projects are expected to be developed as extension projects to the Central New Hanover project. He said potential commodity crops to be

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developed or revived include cocoa, coffee, coconut, high valued tree species and food production.

He said the agro-forestry project will lead to development of basic infrastructure including roads which in turn will create more opportunities for the villagers to be involved in cash income earning activities. Road accessibility will mean more villagers will take their produce to markets, villagers will have access to government services, and to seek health services, children will be able to attend schools.

Mr Anis said people who have been involved in making the project become a reality had a dream that people of New Hanover will one day travel around the island in a vehicle, live in permanent houses, have access to good water supply, access to infrastructure like roads, aid posts, schools and markets. They wanted their people to have access to cash income and improve their livelihoods.

Mr Anis said the hard work is just starting. There are bigger challenges along the way to achieving prosperity and he urged the landowners and community to be united and committed in achieving the objectives of the project. Normal timber royalties, premiums and other levies are being paid directly to the Incorporated Land Groups (ILGs), however, landowners have been urged to utilise some of these benefits as equity in the development or be involved in spin-off businesses.

“Change New Hanover for a better future,” Mr Anis told the big crowd. “Rise up to another level, stand up and be involved. Free up your customary land for development.”

TDL together with its investor partner, the local level government, provincial administration, ILGs and communities, will strive to ensure that family units and individuals have access to income, housing and shelter, food, water, clothing, basic education, primary health care, and spiritual development.

Mr Anis challenged the landowners and community to make an impact by planting another 5 million rubber trees. He said the people must be given the opportunity to make productive use of their land to sustain their livelihood and earn cash to meet basic needs.

He said that local villagers are already engaged in various phases of the development, especially in road construction, logging operation, rubber nursery field work, housing and other activities. It is estimated that up to 3,000 people will eventually be employed in the total operation of the project.

Mr Anis said besides creating employment opportunities for villagers, including school leavers, the project is also enabling spin-off business opportunities. Some landowners have already built homes made of permanent materials, purchased outboard motors, generators, started up trade stores and other activities.



Road link at Meteiai in New Hanover provides access to markets and basic services

Improved sea transport from New Hanover to Kavieng township for marketing, trading, communication and business will improve as a result of improved road network that will be an important part of the development. Road infrastructure is the main priority and will provide market accessibility to other areas within the project area and therefore stimulate development in other agricultural and business activities.

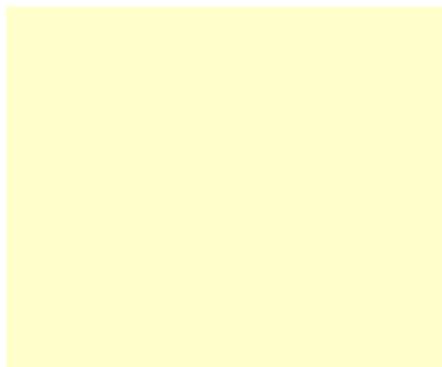
The overall development objectives of the project and others to be established are complimentary to the various development policies of both the provincial and national governments. These include the Malagan Declaration 2008's vision to transform New Ireland into a self-reliant, autonomous part of PNG that is efficient, market orientated and internationally competitive, Medium Term Development Strategy, and the National Agriculture Development Programme.

Mr Anis said TDL and its partners are fully aware and will comply with all the requirements relating to environmental policies. The companies will ensure that natural ecosystems and environmental values that are identified will be demarcated and protected.

TDL was incorporated in 1999 and has been operating in New Ireland for more than 12 years, carrying out logging, developing cocoa, coconut and high value tree plantation work.

Meanwhile Joinland (PNG) Ltd pledges to seek God ahead of development and therefore support for churches would be eminent in the area. Managing Director Deodatus Hii said in order for the people to have a better future and lifestyle, they must put God first in everything they do. He said the project development is in their hands with God's blessing and urged them to use their knowledge and wisdom in ensuring the benefits go to the people. Mr Hii said his company plans to build churches first in every community, before building aid posts and schools.

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