

Wealth

Sun Life to grow its local presence through innovative products

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Sun Life president and CEO Kevin Strain

KUALA LUMPUR (Jan 20): Sun Life Financial Inc, a life insurance company based in Canada, aims to further expand its business in Malaysia through bancassurance partnerships and agency force, said the firm's president and chief executive officer Kevin Strain.

He said the expansion plan is supported by a full suite of innovative life insurance and Takaful products. For instance, the firm launched two investment-linked environmental, social and governance (ESG) funds in the last couple of years, responding to the newest market trend and consumers' demands.

"We are always looking at the products and services we offer and how we can provide more options to clients to meet their needs," he said.

Strain said the insurer is also exploring ways to better service the underserved communities that are more vulnerable to financial shocks. Doing so would help the Malaysian government in achieving its goal to increase the country's insurance penetration rate to 75%.

The insurance penetration rate, measured by the ratio of total number of life insurance and family takaful policies to the total population, has hovered above 50% in recent years without significant breakthrough.

Increasing the insurance penetration rate would mean providing more financial protection to more households when unexpected events occur, including death, accidents and medical and health issues.

"We believe everyone should have access to insurance and be able to afford a plan that best suits their needs. These insurance policies can be tailored to individuals or unique circumstances," said Strain.

Digitalisation and innovation are two areas that Sun Life would continue to focus on, added Strain. This is evidenced by the fact that as of November last year, close to 90% of new business applications under the company were submitted digitally, a significant increase from 20% a year ago.

He said the firm has intensified its digital efforts, which include investment in technology, digital and analytics. This would transform its operational efficiency and the experience of its clients and advisers.

As of the third quarter of last year, Sun Life was one of the biggest bancatakaful players locally with 37% market share. Strain wants to build on such momentum moving forward while contributing to the local community.

From a business perspective, Sun Life is looking forward to growing its asset management and wealth business this year, which is part of its strategy to build a balanced and diversified business in terms of product and geographical mix.

The company is also setting its eyes on Asia, said Strain. "There is incredible potential for growth in Asia. In fact, the region is a growth engine for Sun Life. We want to be a regional leader in all eight of our markets, which means maintaining strong momentum throughout our businesses," he said.

The markets that Sun Life is in include the US, Canada, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippine, Vietnam, India and China.

According to its 2021 annual report, Sun Life is publicly listed on the stock exchanges in Toronto, New York and Philippine. As of Dec 31, 2021, it has a total asset under management for US\$1.44 trillion (RM6.17 trillion) and paid US\$18.7 billion claims and benefits.