

& MARKETS

CEO
2Y

xt year

ly several years after TT11 gets the approval as a third or fourth-line treatment that Tessa has targeted in 2025. But once possible, it would present a much wider market opportunity. "(That) could open the space for chemo-free treatment, or patients not having to go through stem-cell replacement, which is very toxic and very expensive as well," said Willemsen.

Hitting the next milestones

TT11 and TT11X are now front and centre of Tessa's strategy. But years earlier, the company mostly made the news for its other asset, TT10, which targeted nasopharyngeal cancer.

In 2014, it kicked off a Phase 3 trial for TT10 with 330 patients, but decided to halt it in 2020 for technical reasons that had to do with how the trial was designed, said chief medical officer and chief scientific officer Ivan Horak. He emphasised that Tessa has learned lessons that it is applying to its current efforts.

Added Willemsen: "We are also a company that has grown and has learned from past experience... I'm very confident that Tessa will be viewed as a company with a much higher probability of this time, of making it to approval."

The Business Times reported in 2017 that the company was mulling a potential initial public offering (IPO) on the Nasdaq, but this has not materialised. An IPO in future could yet be a possibility, said Willemsen. But for now, Tessa is

Former Noble directors who were issued 'stern warnings' named by Acra

By Michelle Zhu

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THE 2 former directors of Noble Group Ltd's (NGL) subsidiary, Noble Resources International (NRI), who were issued "stern warnings" by the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority (Acra) have been identified as Neil Timothy Dhar and Timothy Martin Eyre.

An Acra spokesperson confirmed this late on Wednesday (Aug 31) when contacted by *The Business Times*.

Dhar and Eyre, who were previously not named, received the warnings from Acra for failing to prepare and table annual financial statements that complied with prescribed accounting standards in Singapore.

This came as part of Acra's conclusion of joint investigations with the Monetary Authority of Singapore into NGL, which resulted in a

S\$12.6 million civil penalty imposed on the commodities company for publishing misleading information in its financial statements.

The outcome was deemed a "slap on the wrist" and "unsurprising" by Iceberg Research's Arnaud Vagner in a note published online on Aug 2nd, where Acra was also called out for not naming the 2 NRI directors.

Wrote Vagner: "Acra issued 'stern warnings' to 2 former directors. That sounds scary. However, they refused to reveal their names because... it could hurt their feelings?"

Dhar and Eyre were among the 6 NRI directors (as at 2016) listed in the blog post alongside Jeffrey Alam, Will Randall, Jeff Frase and Paul Jackaman.

Dhar was said to be a co-manager of NGL's coal business together with Randall, while Eyre was described by Vagner as "a lawyer".

Golden Agri unit to defer proposed IPO in India

By Vivienne Tay

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GOLDEN Agri-Resources on Wednesday (Aug 31) said plans to list its India subsidiary on both the Bombay Stock Exchange and National Stock Exchange of India will be suspended.

GEMI Edibles & Fats India (GEF) is in the process of finalising its application to suspend its pro-

rupees or about S\$100 million from the initial public offering of the 56.3-per-cent-owned subsidiary. "The company and GEF will continue to explore opportunities to enhance shareholders' value," Golden-Agri said.

GEF, which is incorporated in India, is engaged in the manufacturing, distribution and branding of edible oils and speciality fats. Its product portfolio includes sun-

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& COMPANIES

Asia still key in cocoa industry despite lower production

There has been lack of investment in Indonesia; farmers there and in Malaysia are ey

By Uma Devi

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ALTHOUGH Asia has seen its share of cocoa production fall significantly over the past decade, market watchers still believe the region plays a key role in the commodity's industry in terms of both demand and supply.

Speaking at a panel entitled *Cocoa Fundamentals Outlook for Asia: Supply and Demand* at the International Cocoa Conference on Thursday (Sep 1), Rabobank analyst Oscar Tjakra noted that 10 years ago, Asia accounted for 13.3 per cent of cocoa production. Today, the region accounts for just 4.3 per cent.

According to Rabobank's estimates for 2022, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore are major cocoa-processing locations in the region. But these countries have seen their share of challenges, which have caused production figures to fall.

Of these 3 countries, Indonesia is the biggest cocoa producer. But Tjakra said that production in Indonesia has fallen from 500,000 tonnes to 180,000 tonnes over the past 10 years. One of the factors that has led to the decline is low yield, which is triggered by a lack of knowledge and technical expertise. There has also been a lack of investment in Indonesia's cocoa industry. For instance, trees are older, and smallholder farmers have limited access to replanting.

Over in Malaysia, production has declined as the expansion of oil palm plantations has led to the exit of cocoa producers from the industry. Singapore's production capacity has not changed much, as the country is more of a processor than



In Malaysia, production has declined as the expansion of oil palm plantations has led to the exit of cocoa producers from the industry. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

Some farmers in both Indonesia and Malaysia have also shifted their focus to other agri-commodities – including corn and durians – that will reap higher profits.

Farmers in Malaysia are also looking at using the land for real estate, noted Tjakra.

While prices of other agri-commodities have been hitting historical highs over the past year amid food inflation and favourable demand-supply dynamics, cocoa prices are relatively flat year on year.

Michel Arrion, executive director of the International Cocoa Organization and a speaker at the panel, noted that cocoa prices are "too low to provide farmers with a decent living income".

Over the past 50 years, the cocoa market has had about 32 years of surplus and 17 years of deficits. "The cocoa market is structurally in

demand and prices are low," said Arrion.

There are, however, bright spots. Tjakra said cocoa production yields are still increasing at a small volume in countries such as India, Vietnam and the Philippines, and yields still have room to grow.

On the demand end, Asia is also a key importer of cocoa. The region accounts for more than 25 per cent of global cocoa powder imports, making it the second largest importer of cocoa powder globally. The largest consumers in Asia include Japan, India, China and Indonesia.

Looking ahead, Tjakra said there are certain issues that will impact the cocoa industry in the near term. Although container spot rates have subsided significantly from 2021 peaks, he said that rates are not expected to fall back to the levels they were at back in 2020.