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COVER STORY
MAHSING:
TAN SRI DATO' SRI LEONG HOY KUM
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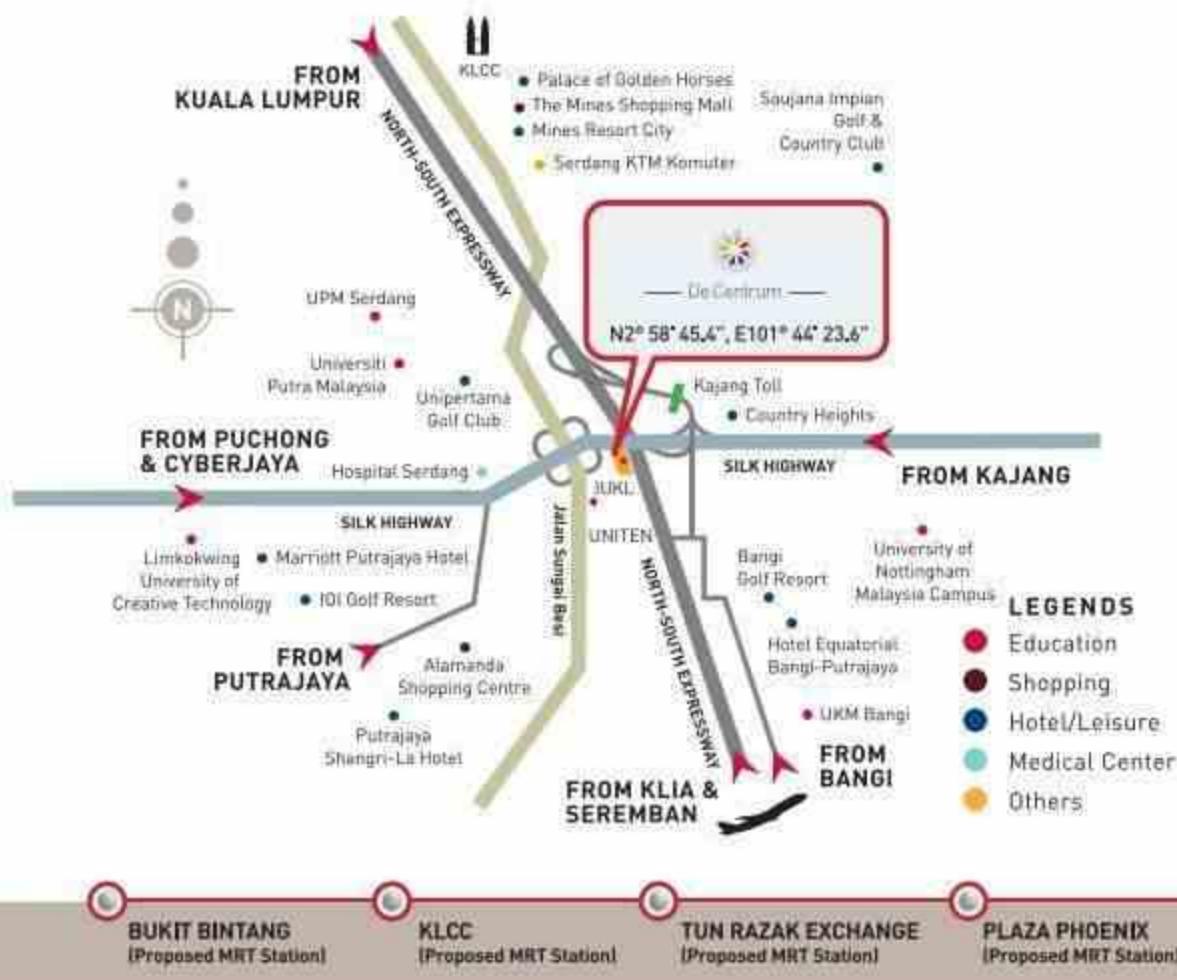
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8



16



25

COVER STORY**8 | MahSing: Tan Sri Dato' Sri Leong Hoy Kum**

An exploration of the past, present, and future of the corporate giant.

FEATURE STORY**12 | Value Of Green: Landscaping**

A Unique Selling Point, or something more?

FEATURED PROPERTIES**16 | Rencana Royale**

The New Defining Face of TTDI

AREA FOCUS**18 | An Inside Look At Kota Kemuning**

An excellent location for own-stay?

HOME +**22 | 8 Energy Saving Gadgets**

Devices and decisions that make a significant impact!

30 | Metal Roofing - The Latest Trend For Homes

A sit-down conversation with Dato' Kiat Tung

PERSONALITY OF THE MONTH**25 | Designing For Small Spaces**

Exclusive interview with Ms Aida Anis.

STRATEGY**28 | Insert Property "Title" Here**

Clearing up the air of confusion.



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Many people opt out of property investment for many reasons. It might be because they have other commitments in life, or maybe buying a property is not among the list of priorities they have on hand. However, there is one reasoning in which I would like to address in today's topic i.e. "I haven't found the perfect property yet."

To those who abide by this reasoning, I would like to ask them: "What exactly is a perfect property?"

As you slowly unravel the answer to this question, you will find yourself answering to fairly unreasonable criteria. Do you want an undervalued property in a matured neighbourhood producing positive cash flow rental while attracting quality tenants, all while having guaranteed returns if you sell it after five years?

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You will notice that it is fairly unreasonable spending time and effort pursuing the "perfect property" when there are plenty of "good enough" properties on the market. Grade A properties are very hard to come by and are most likely bought off before launching through bulk purchases by private, influential property investor groups.

I hold a personal belief that you don't need to buy the perfect property in order to succeed in the world of property investment. However, you must play the game in order to stand a chance to win it. There is no shame in purchasing a mid-tier property as your first ever investment as long as you can find a way to profit from it.

A special note to beginner investors is to never go beyond your means and always plan for the worst. Having a sizeable emergency fund serves as a great safety net for times when you have a vacancy problem. And if you stumble upon a property that is too good to be true, it most likely is, so please do your due diligence and plan accordingly.

There is a lot of fear surrounding property investment, but soon you will find that it is more boring than scary. Results of your investment can only bear fruit after a long stretch of time, and there is a lot of research and planning involved.

But it is definitely a profitable journey if you play your cards right and there is nothing to be afraid of. I would like to wish new investors good luck in your journey, and remember to play the game safely.

DATO' KK CHUA

EDITOR IN CHIEF

PROPERTY INSIGHT

On The Cover



TAN SRI DATO' SRI LEONG HOY KUM

Group Managing Director /
Group Chief Executive of
Mah Sing Group



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HOC-MAPEX Expo 2019

The HOC-MAPEX Exhibition held in Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre from 1st - 3rd March 2019, marks the first exhibition amongst many as part of the Home Ownership Campaign, an initiative by the Malaysian Ministry of Finance.

First time Malaysian house-buyers will be exempted from stamp duties for the purchase of properties under the HOC made between January to June 2019. Developers will also offer attractive incentives and discounts for home purchases throughout the HOC campaign.

51 developers have taken part in this exhibition, with a total of 17,000 residential units up for grabs during the HOC period.

Mah Sing Acquires New 4.63 Acre Freehold Project

Mah Sing Properties Sdn Bhd has acquired prime freehold land in Mukim Petaling, measuring approximately 4.63 acres for a total of RM90.3million. The project will have an estimated gross development value of RM500million.

"The location is very prime and we intend to plan 2-bedroom units for first-time homebuyers, with an indicative built up from 700 sq ft and indicatively priced from RM428,000," said Lionel Leong, Director of Group Strategy and Operations of Mah Sing.



PAM President Night

The Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM) has organized a President Night on the 29th of March 2019, to celebrate the service and efforts made towards the industry of the current acting president, Ar. Ezumi Harzani Ismail.

The dinner was held after the final council meeting of Mr Ezumi's presidency, and the night was a joyous and memorable occasion for both the PAM staff and council members.

Mr Ezumi assures that he will continue his work diligently until the election of his successor, which will be held shortly.

A special note, Mr Ezumi will be representing PAM as one of the key judges involved in the upcoming Property Insight Prestigious Developer Award (PIPDA) 2019, which is scheduled to be held on 3rd May 2019 at Shangri-La Kuala Lumpur.



MGB Opens First Permanent IBS Precast Concrete Plant

MGB Berhad, a subsidiary of LBS Bina Group Berhad, officially launched its first permanent Industrialised Building System (IBS) precast concrete plant located in Nilai. The plant has a built-up space of 119,017 sq ft, which will produce, market, sell and install a range of IBS components from precast concrete panels, concrete wall panels, concrete slabs columns and beams.

With IBS, the pilot project has a saving of 33% on construction time and a 49% reduction in total on-site labour costs. "Our RM40 million investment reflects the company's commitment to expand further into the local IBS market," said MGB Berhad Group Managing Director, Tan Sri Lim Hock San.



Tu-E Capital Not A Licensed Developer

The Malaysian Ministry of Housing and Local Government (KPKT) has announced that Tu-E Capital is not a housing developer nor is it licensed under the Housing Development Act. Tu-E Capital had been using fraudulent approaches to offer free housing through a GIDIFA-sponsored programme, while collecting fees between RM10,000 and RM20,000 from contractors.

The supposedly company director, Dato' Mohamad Zahari Awang, did not hold such a post with any of the licensed developers in the industry. The ministry advised the public to immediately report to the local police if they have received any fraudulent letter or notices pertaining to the company.



MIEA Against Illegal Brokering by Proptech Companies

The Malaysian Institute of Estate Agents (MIEA) alleged that local and Singaporean proptech startups are carrying out real estate practices illegally. Nine companies have been identified so far and the MIEA is ready to lodge police reports on those that are circumventing the law.

"They claim to help the public sell and rent their properties, meaning that they are illegally operating real estate practice when they collect a fee in any shape or form," said Eric Lim, President of the MIEA.

This is in reference to agency practices governed by Act 242 (Valuers, Appraisers and Estate Agents Act 1981), whereby real estate agents and negotiators must be registered and certified by the Board of Valuers, Appraisers, Estate Agents and Property Managers (BOVAEP).

MAHSING: TAN SRI DATO' SRI LEONG HOY KUM

The Red Which Took The Market By Storm

By: Jotham Lim



M Vertica, Cheras

INTRODUCTION

Since being incorporated in 1994, MahSing has garnered a reputation as one of the market leaders in the property development sector here in Malaysia. MahSing has always been recognised for its prominent visibility, value for money products and fantastic customer service. Its properties can be seen across the entirety of Malaysia, and when in search of new properties with great value, it is hard not to consider MahSing properties.

However, a company's success can only be as great as its leadership. We reached out to MahSing in an attempt to pull back the curtains and take a sneak peek at the man behind the corporate giant - Tan Sri Dato' Sri Leong Hoy Kum.

MILESTONES

It is hard to imagine the current MahSing coming from humble beginnings as a plastics trading firm in 1965. Number plates back then used to be made out of metal, but MahSing was able to corner the market once there was a switch to using plastic instead. Before venturing into the property sector, MahSing was considered the largest number plate manufacturer in Malaysia, owning and operating one the

most massive arsenals of plastic molding machinery in ASEAN.

Digging deeper, we were curious as to know why there was a switch to developing property instead. Following their success in the plastics industry, Tan Sri Leong had decided to venture heavily into property investment. However, they have faced difficulties acquiring great deals as they were few and far between, and golden deals were often snatched up fairly quickly, most of them even before announcing their official launchings.

While most would shake their heads in dismay, but Tan Sri Leong instead found an opportunity worth capitalizing upon. He was given a chance to buy a lot in Selangor at a great price and he didn't hesitate to acquire it. Tan Sri then placed the plastic company in the hands of the then executive director and became the first and only employee of the property arm of MahSing Group.

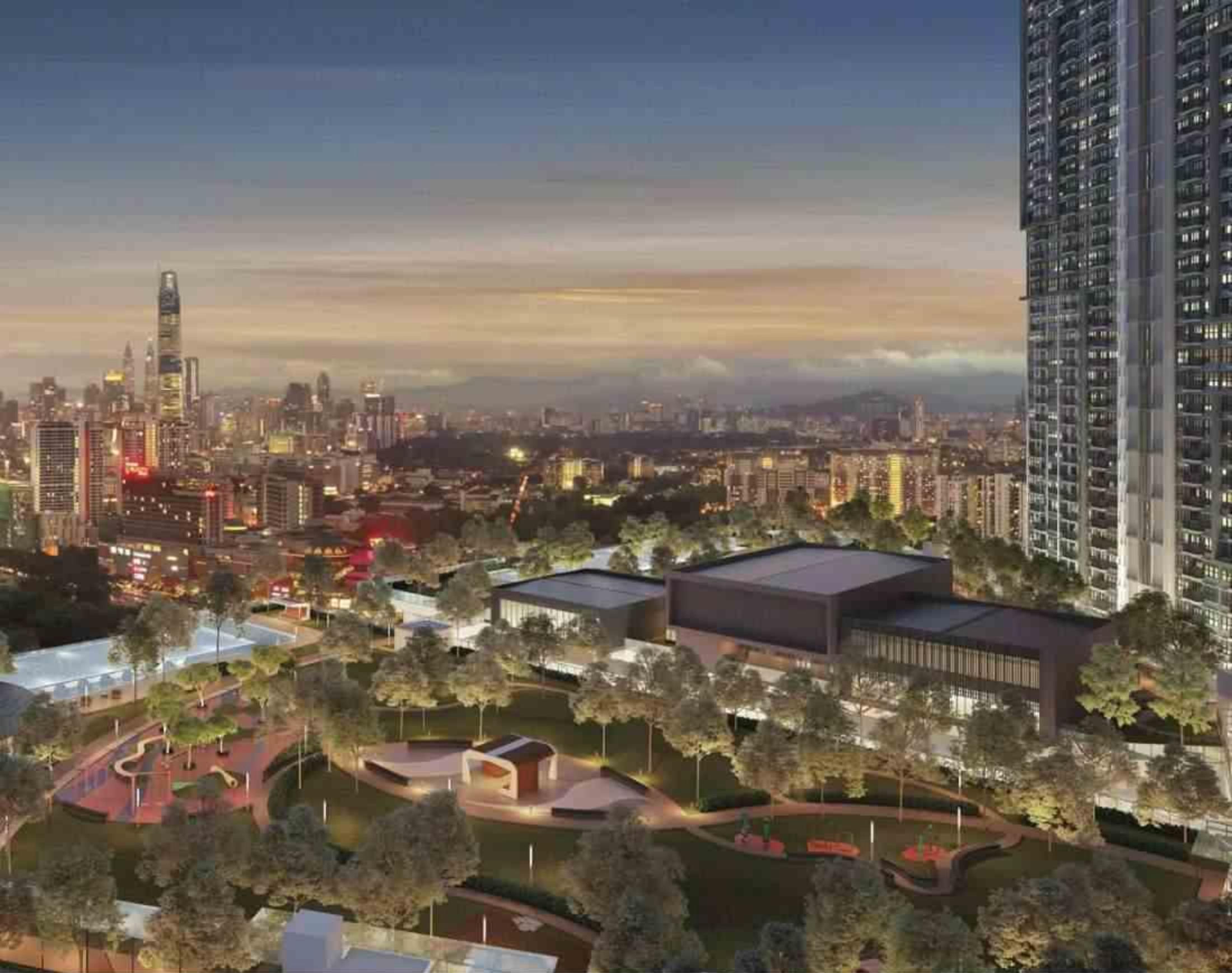
For five years, there wasn't much growth, but then came the big break in Johor with the launching of MahSing's maiden township in 2000 - Sri Pulai Perdana. Tan Sri did something never seen before in Malaysia and established the first ever gated community comprising of linked homes, as opposed to the

traditional semi-detached homes. It even features an exotic Roman courtyard and a 12-acre neo-classical Central Park, the first of its kind in Johor Bahru.

From there came a period of rapid expansion, from The Icon commercial space in Jalan Tun Razak to the development of industrial space with the i-Parc series. Their reach has expanded into Eastern Malaysia with Sutera Avenue in Sabah, and now, they have strengthened their foothold in Klang Valley with multiple developments, from Rawang all the way to down south into Bangi.

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Right before meeting Tan Sri in person, I had the pleasure of chatting with a few close associates of his to get a different perspective of the man in question. It was great being able to meet with Datuk Ho



Hon Sang, the Chief Executive Officer of MahSing, and he had this to say:

"Tan Sri is first and foremost, a very dear friend of mine. He will often surprise us with pleasant comments and kind remarks out of nowhere, which will catch us all off guard. It is very nice and motivating to know that your hard work is appreciated and understood.

Tan Sri is also someone that upholds his promises. He remembers what he says and will act upon it without fail. In fact, his memory can go as far back as to the history of all the pieces of land he has bought, the names of the previous owners and the number of times the land has exchanged hands. It still amazes me every time.

I enjoy the working relationship I have with Tan Sri Leong. Tan Sri will always want to take a step further and add value for MahSing's customers; hence the high





Southville City, KL South

expectations he has for his employees. Even then, these expectations are reasonable and achievable within the guidelines and frameworks set. The staff has to be very well prepared as they wouldn't want to be caught off guard."

Lyanna Tew, Senior General Manager of Strategic Communications, Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility, also pitched in.

"I have been working with Tan Sri for 13 years, and if I were to summarise him into a single sentence, I would say that he is very committed and he doesn't take no for an answer. It's not far fetched to say that he is one of the most diligent people that I've seen, and he expects his staff to be at the same level as well."

Despite his cool outward experience, he likes to take huge calculated risks, and he has always been this way. Back during the plastic industry days, he would borrow large amounts of money and buy

10 to 20 units of machinery at a time. People would think he was mad! Even now, he will buy large pieces of land from the land bank, but things would turn out okay. He certainly has a knack of finding certainties amongst a sea of ambiguity.

In 2005, we took on five projects simultaneously, which we thought was impossible to do so. Yet, Tan Sri was able to grow the company up to 47 projects currently, while still maintaining a healthy balance sheet. Imagine the level of discipline needed to maintain such a high level of performance.

For growth at this breakneck speed, regular companies would generally need to gear up and worry about taking on massive debt. However, Tan Sri is exceptionally particular about not overgearing; thus we will always have a healthy pool of resources in order to take advantage of all the opportunities that come our way."

Q&A WITH TAN SRI LEONG

After a brief exchange of pleasantries between Tan Sri and the editorial team, we proceeded with the interview. Meeting Tan Sri Leong for the very first time is a pleasant surprise as he is fairly approachable, friendly and humorous despite being a prominent member of the industry. He is openly honest with his views on matters, and he is willing to share whatever he knows.

Congratulations on Mah Sing's 25th Anniversary! What can be expected out of this special occasion?

First and foremost, I would like to thank our customers and stakeholders that have made Mah Sing what it is today. For our 25th anniversary, we have launched an "RM500,000 in your bank" campaign as a way to give thanks to our customers that have supported us thus far.

There will be plenty of incentives and

benefits totalling up to RM500,000 that we can offer to homebuyers. And this is on top of the already hefty benefits provided by our local government, such as the stamp duty waivers given through the Home Ownership Campaign (HOC).

We have also launched a referral program called the Refer & Rewards + (R&R+) which offers up to RM60,000 for every friend or family member that has signed up to buy our properties. In actuality, this program was only meant to last throughout the HOC2019 exhibition, but we decided to extend this program until the 30th of June due to popular demand.

How did the name MahSing come to be?

During the early years of the company, back when we focused on manufactured plastics, our dreams and aspirations were small. To be able to tackle both the Malaysian and Singaporean market was a huge hurdle to overcome, and it took us many attempts, but we managed to succeed in capturing both markets. The term MahSing is derived from the word Malaysia and Singapore, to serve as a constant reminder of our humble origins, and to serve as a compass to where we are heading towards.

Is it tough, transitioning from the plastics industry to the property sector?

Not particularly. The plastic manufacturing arm of MahSing has always been self-sustaining, and I have a fantastic team of people managing the company to thank for that. People have always assumed that moving to an entirely different industry is an arduous process to go through, but I personally believe that finding opportunities, and the ability and willingness to adapt to market changes is part and parcel of being a businessman.

Sometimes, fate can surprise you in many ways. Did you know that the piece of land Icon City is built upon was once owned by Panasonic? Panasonic was also one of our first major clientele during our plastic manufacturing days. It is essential to meet and mix with the



Ferringhi Residence

correct people, and to provide excellent service to your existing clients, because you will never know what will happen in the future.

How does MahSing stand out amongst other developers?

If I were to list all of our unique selling points, this interview would last forever! *laughs* But I can summarise it down to a few major key points.

First of all, we are very practical in our operations and design. In terms of layout, we design it in such a way that requires little to no major renovations. It is common for homebuyers to break down out-of-place columns and pillars to make space due to bad design. It is ironic that developers have to pay to build a wall, just to have the buyers spend money to hack it down. We adopt an open space design, whereby the homeowners can customise the space however they want.

We are also one of the very few developers that have a healthy balance sheet and plenty of immediate cash on hand, giving us the ability to hold and acquire lands at a reasonable price at any moment's notice. Our vendors also know that we have the ability to pay on time, so if the terms and pricing are right, we can close a deal very quickly.



M Centura, Sentul

Finally, we are very visible. MahSing's projects can be seen throughout Malaysia, with 47 projects in total. We also heavily invest in prime locations and established neighbourhoods. For individual projects, you can take a look at M Vertica, which is just 500m away from MRT Maluri and LRT exchange. For our Southville City township, it is located at the midway point between Seremban and Kuala Lumpur, which many people actually travel to and



Meridin East, Johor

from for work purposes.

We heavily invest in infrastructure as well, developing plenty of ramps and highways to reduce travel time and congestions. Our research shows that the new interchange for Southville City is able to cut off the travel distance by a total of 6km. Not only are we selling the property, but the facilities and benefits that go along with it as well.

Some of our readers are dying to know if there plans to further venture into the landed property market. Any thoughts?

This is a very tricky question to answer because it really depends on our customer needs and wants. Yes, we do have the land and resources to embark on such projects, but our surveys point towards a greater demand for high-rise properties in convenient locations, preferably within walking distance to public transport.

We do not go into a business for the sake of doing so, as we have a "customer first" philosophy. For example, we opened our first hotel, Ramada Meridin Johor Bahru, in anticipation of the many crowds that will be visiting the nearby Legoland.

Our business model also warrants a high-turnaround rate. "Professionally managed but entrepreneur run," as I like to call it. For all our projects, we set a goal for ourselves to launch the project within 6 to 9 months after the land acquisition. Doing an early launch lets us determine if we are offering the right product for the market. If our project is not what the consumers want, we can always change to suit their needs. We need to be flexible, fast and quick to adapt, and that's how you gain an edge over the market.

But to those readers in question - Yes, we do have several landed properties inside and outside of Klang Valley. I welcome the readers to take a look at a few projects we have in Penang, Rawang, Johor and Southville City.

What are the challenges you are currently facing in the market?

As many of you have heard time and time again, we are currently facing a glut in the property market. However, I believe that this is only a "perceived glut" as the demand for quality, affordable homes has never truly been diminished, as evident

from the property overhang statistics.

From what I can see, there isn't a lack of demand for homes. Instead, there is a lack of the right product for the right customers. Home affordability is definitely one of the key issues here in the market. However, for MahSing specifically, I would say that we are performing quite well despite the market response.

We are currently still hitting our sales targets, and the HOC 2019 campaign has reported good bookings. I believe that this can be attributed to our research team that took the time and effort to understand the market needs and wants, and for us to deliver the correct product to the market.

On top of that, we have sufficient resources to prepare for any unexpected problems that may arise, or tackle any opportunities that come our way. I believe that this is good news to our shareholders who have placed their faith in this company.

You did mention about home affordability. Care to share more insights?

When they speak of affordability, they are only thinking in terms of price and quantity. A RM350,000 condominium in Klang Valley is "affordable" in terms of price alone, but it may be located in an undesired location without proper access to public transportation.

The frequently less mentioned aspect is the value for money you get out of the property. Affordable homes do not have to be featureless. They can be well designed, have excellent facilities, with the tradeoff being needing to put up with a certain level of density, a tradeoff many buyers are willing to make. This is the basics of economics of scale.

We can easily duplicate design themes, pricing and structures of our projects, which we pay very close attention to. We are also careful to pay contractors on time accordingly and adequately, so they can focus on delivering great workmanship. I am proud to say that we have been given a four-star rating on the CIDB (Construction Industry Development Board), which are only given to developers which comply

to the best industry practices and a display of proficiency in terms of project management and technicalities.

At the end of the day, our main contractors and subcontractors are in the same boat as us as well. It is important to take good care of them, as they are the central pillar of all property development projects.

What do you foresee happening in the market in the near future, and how will you prepare for it?

I believe that the perceived glut in the property market will continue for some time. Do note that NAPIC (National Property Information Centre) will only show you the general numbers, and unsold properties in rural locations without proper access will inflate the statistics. The market is in demand for affordable housing with easy access to public transport systems.

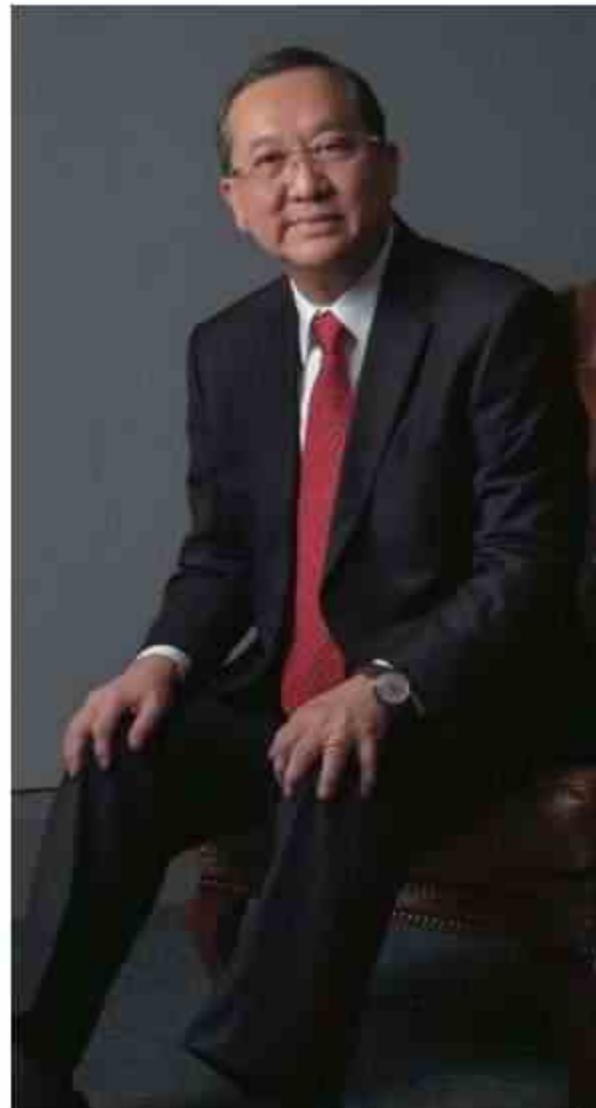
As for MahSing, I have no plans for significantly changing our corporate directives and direction. We are not launching units by the thousands, like the year 2011, where we launched 3000 units in Bangi, and all of them got snapped up in short order.

Nowadays, we are launching units in the hundreds at a time, and we have strict internal guidelines to regulate the sales launchings as well. For high rise properties, we will only release a few floors at a time to gauge the market.

What would you say is MahSing's most interesting and creative project?

For the record, I would like to state that I pay close attention to every project under our wing, so I wouldn't say that any project is my "favourite" per se. However, for the most interesting project we have done so far, I would no doubt select Icon Residence, located in Mont Kiara.

The inspiration behind Icon Residence is actually from the city layout planning of Santorini in Greece. If you can see from the photos, these houses look like little boxes placed on the hill, and the way they design it, it is as if every unit is a corner unit. I believed that we could



“

We need to be flexible, fast and quick to adapt, and that's how you gain an edge over the market.”

- Tan Sri Dato' Sri Leong Hoy Kum

emulate this design concept and bring it here to Malaysia.

It was no doubt a challenging task to replicate such a concept on a high-rise property, but we did deliver. Every unit of the Icon Residence has a different layout, and everything is highly customizable. So customizable to the point where it is better to have a checklist of requirements and present it to the salesperson, and he or she will pick out the most suitable unit for you. It is a considerable risk at the time to embark on such a project, but with Mont Kiara being such a high-class neighbourhood, everything turned out surprisingly well.

However, we did not forget our core

customer base from the B40 and M40 group. That is why we have released reasonably affordable two-or-three bedroom projects such as M Centura in Sentul, M Vertica in Cheras, Sensory@Southville City in KL South and M Aruna in Rawang.

Recently, we have started releasing a large number of mixed development projects. According to our research, improving and enhancing the lifestyle of regular white-collared employees is essential in this day and age. If people do not have the desired luxurious lifestyle and convenience in terms of location and accessibility, it will negatively impact their work productivity.

Hence, we have developed Icon City with 20 acres of land. It is just beside the LDP and Federal Highway, two of the busiest highways in the Klang Valley. For the upcoming launch of Onyx@Icon City, we have incorporated wellness features to help boost employee productivity, catering to both multinational corporations and small businesses as well.

In the end, it all really depends on the market needs. It pays to be observant, patient and careful, especially on the minute details. Whenever there is a call-to-action, MahSing will definitely deliver.

CONCLUSIONS

It is evident from Tan Sri Leong's words and mannerisms that he has extensive knowledge of the property sector and the demands of the market. Even from this brief encounter, we can understand why the staff members sing such high praises of him, a man's whose vision, creative drive, and strategic risk-taking has created one of Malaysia's foremost property development companies. But alas, due to time constraints the interview was cut short, and any further insights would be a story for another time.

The editorial team is very much looking forward to what MahSing has in store. They are indeed a force to be reckoned with, and we believe that they, as a property developer, will make huge waves in the industry. Now it is up to us to decide if we are to ride the tides.

VALUE OF GREEN: LANDSCAPING

More Than Just Aesthetics

By: Jotham Lim

When purchasing or developing properties, many factors come into play that require heavy consideration. The usual suspects include the location of the project, the size of the project, its pricing and value per sq ft.

What usually goes unnoticed, however, is the time and effort required to landscape the said project, but that has been slowly changing in recent years. With plenty of new projects emerging from the horizon, many developers and homebuyers are starting to be much more aware of the importance of landscaping, and today we shall dive deep and explore the hidden values that lay just underneath the surface of the grassy plains.

To bring another voice into this conversation, we have reached out to Dr Suhardi Maulan, President of the Institute of Landscape Architects Malaysia (ILAM) and Head of Department of Landscape Architecture in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

Property Insight is proud to say that Dr Suhardi is one of our esteemed judges for our upcoming Property Insight Prestigious Developer Awards (PIPDA) 2019 awards, and we believe that his insights will add plenty to the discussion.

Landscaping is a growing topic in recent years. What are the common misconceptions people have in regards to landscaping as an industry?

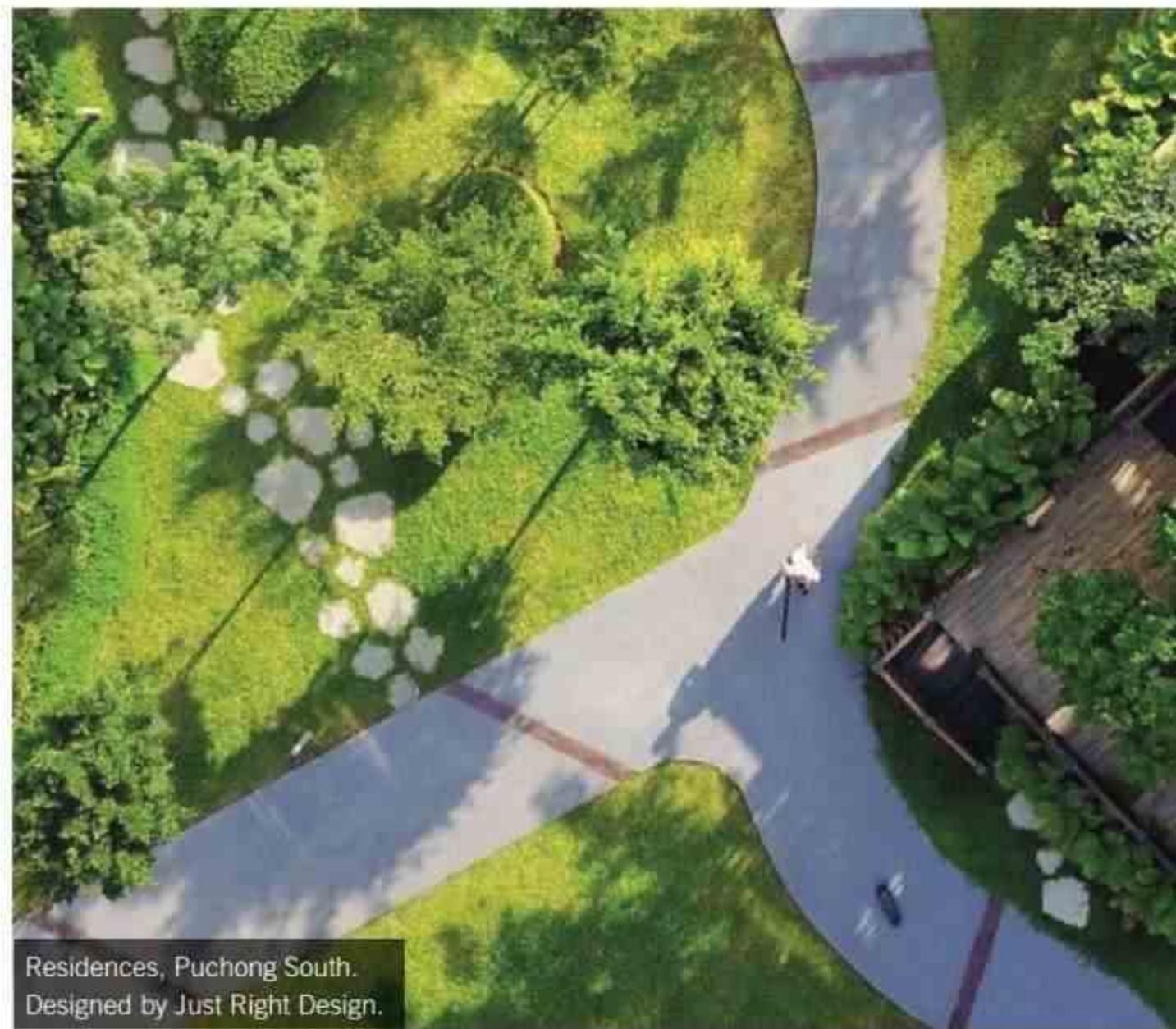
I have many students joining my programme with the initial impression

that landscape architecture is all about garden designing and the management of trees. However, there is much more to this "growing" topic than just growing trees and plants.

I would say that flora management takes up only 20% of the discipline. In real life situations, landscape architecture is all about planning around the available natural resources.

As landscape architects, our job is to make sure that the built environment and natural environment can co-exist with each other while still remaining useful to the people in that space.

A common misconception people have towards landscaping is that it is a major project that requires intensive unearthing and reallocating of soil and resources. Yes, the public needs a recreational space



Residences, Puchong South.
Designed by Just Right Design.

to relax and enjoy what the greenery has to offer, but not at the expense of damaging the natural ecosystem.

Landscape architects have a responsibility to advise developers and the team on how to landscape appropriately, to fulfil all the required needs while ensuring both air and water quality control and intact biodiversity.

Looks like landscaping is more than just pure aesthetics. Care to share what other values landscaping bring to the table?

Many developers have slowly realised that landscaping can actually bring in economic benefits as well. When constructing commercial spaces like shopping malls or mixed developments, a good landscape design can be a great crowd puller and a way to increase footfall.

Take a look at IOI City Mall in Serdang, and how they managed to marry both great landscaping and the shopping mall

concept perfectly well together. I believe that shopping malls will benefit most from great landscape designs, as they are under the constant competitive threat from online businesses.

In the modern landscape, shopping is no longer the sole reason why the general public would visit shopping malls. They are there for the environment, to socialise, to entertain and for leisure.

We can expect people to loiter both inside and outside of shopping malls, and we can start to see why landscaping is slowly taking up a more substantial role as an economic booster.

Of course, economic benefits are not the only constraint to commercial projects. From a developer's point of view, having a proper landscape design functions as a great marketing tool for residential projects, not to mention the added value it brings to the property. The general consensus is that proper landscaping will increase demand in an area which will be reflected in terms of pricing.

Take the Central Park in New York as an example, all the apartments that are facing the Central Plaza are fetching millions of dollars, all for the view of the landscape itself. Properties are no longer about the properties themselves, but also encompassing whatever that surrounds it.

To the developers out there, if you are willing to allocate more money towards building proper landscape spaces, I believe that you will eventually witness your returns on investment. I understand



Dr Suhardi Maulan

that it is quite hard to justify the cost in the current market climate, but there is an indirect relationship between landscaping and the economic value it brings to the property.

What constitutes a well-designed landscape?

There is a complicated answer to this simple question because there are so many parameters and variables that we need to take into account.

A well-designed landscape needs to have ample space to achieve its purposes. Many make the mistake of assuming bigger is always better, but a huge space may not be easy to navigate through. The ratio between the project and landscape size must be in accordance with the function of the whole development, which brings us to the next point.

Functionality is the key ingredient in making sure the landscape is fully utilised, but this encompasses many miniature factors as well. Biodensity, build quality, noise protection, air quality and design elements all contribute to the functionality of the space.

The functionality of the space will also reflect the social values it brings to the table. If nobody uses the space, it will just be a waste of resources. In summary, a well-designed landscape consists of ample space, proper location, non-disruptive environmental values, enhanced social values and added





Liew Ying Yie

economic values.

Property Insight got in contact with landscape architect Liew Ying Yie, who has accumulated a decade's worth of industry knowledge, to pick her brain on the current status of the industry.

What are the differences between a landscape designer and a landscape architect?

It is fairly common to have used these two terms interchangeably, and both require a bachelor's or master's degree in landscape architecture. However, there is no hard definition that separates these two titles and the borders of responsibilities between these two remain blurry, and is subjected to the job scope given by the attached company.

Overall, it is safe to assume that a landscape designer primarily focuses on the design department while the architect will be primarily be involved in the projects department.

For example, clients would sometimes employ overseas designers to help draft up the initial concepts and then hand it over to the local architects for execution. In this case, the overseas designer is only involved in the designing process, hence their official title of a landscape designer.

What are the challenges and issues that plague your day-to-day life?

It is certainly not a plague, but there are no fixed standards and guidelines for landscape designing as of yet. This is in comparison to Singapore where

landscape projects are heavily monitored and tightly regulated.

There are multiple ways you can look at this, but from the negative end, it could mean destroying the local ecosystem and habitat without doing prior due diligence. On the flip side, designers and architects are allowed the necessary breathing room to express themselves creatively on the field.

The local government has certainly taken up measures to keep this issue from running rampant. In Klang Valley, new developments are required to allocate a minimum of 10% of their project to landscaping and green efforts.

ILAM is also playing a role by gathering these specialists and professionals together to self-monitor and self-regulate, and more importantly, to ensure that the standards of landscape projects are up to satisfactory levels.

Plants and material selection also pose a big challenge in my day to day life. Developers are always on the constant lookout for ways to reduce the maintenance cost through smart and elegant design. An example would be planting the correct tree to provide enough shade to reduce air-conditioning usage. However, the selection of tree species could potentially make or break the entire project.

The final challenge that I find myself looking forward to, strangely enough, is to answer to the ever-increasing demand for quality and creative outdoor spaces. Long gone are the days where typical walkways and playgrounds would suffice. We, as landscape architects, are required to step outside of our comfort zone and explore design concepts that are even more outlandish than before and yet remain practical at the same time.

Property Insight also reached out to landscape architect Lee Choong Hoon from Just Right Design Sdn Bhd to get his comments as well.

What is the working relationship between an architect and the developer?

Throughout my career as a landscape architect, there are three types of clients

that I commonly face on a day to day basis.

The first type of client are developers who would like to develop a working relationship with us purely because they are required to adhere to the requirements set by the local authorities. Budgets can vary wildly, but it is generally a simple, straightforward job for developers to tick another item off their checklist.

The second type of client is a joy to work with. They are developers who see and understand the importance of landscaping, and the values it brings to a certain project. These developers have a clear goal and objectives of what they want out of the project, and it is very easy to establish a clear line of communication with them in terms of design concepts and execution.

The final type of clients are developers who are obsessed with landscaping, using it as a pivotal point to help them sell and market a particular project. Being a key driving factor for their sales, designing and landscaping for these projects requires a deep understanding of the client's needs and wants and a keen eye for minute details.

Where do you see the industry heading towards in the near future?

In short, I would say that I have a fairly positive outlook on the industry. The market sentiments hint at the fact that homebuyers nowadays pay a lot more attention to the facade, the surroundings



Lee Choong Hoon

and the landscape of a project, hence it is a great marketing angle for developers.

In the past, it is all about "location, location, location" - the mantra for property development. However, what happens when multiple developers are competing with each other in the same area, targeting the same demographic, delivering similar products?

This is where landscaping plays a vital role in swaying buyers into investing in a particular project amongst the others.

One of my little gripes, however, is that I want people to understand landscaping is not just about aesthetics, but also about preserving and conserving the local ecosystem. Rather than brute force your way through altering the entire landscape using heavy machinery, I would encourage building and designing around the local ecosystem instead, minimising any human involvement in the area.

This will help any environmental conservation efforts and will significantly improve the quality of land in the area in the long run.

Property Insight also reached out to Douglas Matsen Guest, a design director from Melbourne, Australia with years of international landscape designing experience, to get his views on the matter.

Do the cultural differences affect the way you have designed landscapes in any way?

Yes, it very much does actually. Working in Malaysia, it took me some time to adapt to the local client expectations, timeline, budgets, materials and the tropical environment itself. There are so many factors that you need to take into account when designing a landscape, and I was like a chef given unfamiliar tools.

The most notable point I would like to highlight is that most of my property development clients are of ethnic Chinese background. A big part of developing properties for the ethnic Chinese would be the emphasis on basic Feng Shui principles. Learning all about Feng Shui principles and integrating them into my existing design philosophy is undoubtedly an exciting journey to embark on.

What is exciting about this is that I can take some of these learned principles back to Australia, and vice versa. I have come to believe, and practice, that the combination of eastern and western design philosophies, together with a committed work ethic and an open mind, is a consistently reliable foundation for successful and amazing design outcomes.

Could you walk us through the thought process of designing a landscape?

When designing a landscape, you are actually trying to marry two schools of thoughts together i.e. the technical perspective and the creative outlook.



Douglas Matsen Guest

Designing is more than just art. It is art that serves a functional and practical purpose that can solve real problems.

You can't build a perfectly evaluated technical project without flare as it will turn out to be a soulless space. On the other end of the spectrum, a creative project without proper technical evaluation would be extremely expensive and impractical to embark upon. Every good designer needs to have both elements in play to craft a well-designed landscape.

CONCLUSION

Landscaping is no doubt an integral part of any living and working space, not to mention the Malaysian economy. The latest governmental statistic shows that the construction sector is currently worth RM200 billion, and landscaping is playing a huge role in contributing to the behemoth of an industry.

Do remember that landscaping provides the first and last impression whenever you enter and leave a building or property. So while you are slaving away, paying for the monthly maintenance cost of your condominium unit, why not take the time to enjoy the facilities you have available to you?

After all, you have already paid to use it. And every time you set foot on a grassy plain on the property, remember that a landscape designer has fought hard to place that green patch underneath your feet.





RENCANA ROYALE: THE NEW DEFINING FACE OF TTDI

By: Jotham Lim

What makes some buildings stand out from the rest as iconic landmarks? It all begins with the innovation in design and conceptualization – a unique perspective into making life better for the people around and their way of living.

Located in the affluent township of TTDI, directed accessible from Jalan Datuk Sulaiman, Rencana Royale is envisioned as one such landmark. This award-winning integrated freehold development encompasses the essential components of today's urban living – work, lifestyle, pleasure and enrichment – all within two eye-catching towers housing a plethora of contemporary property, corporate and commercial spaces. Truly, the one address where the best of prestigious TTDI living gravitates towards – this is Rencana Royale.

WHEN THE PROPERTY SUITS THE ADDRESS

Welcome to Rencana Royale, the glistening new landmark in the Taman Tun skyline. Built on Malay reserve land and exclusively for Malay ownership only, the Rencana Royale is a 13-storey, 622 suite low-density development that offers Corporate Suites In The Sky, 2-storey Garden Suites, Deluxe Suites & Duplexes, as well as Executive Suites & Duplexes, meticulously designed with comfort in mind and boasting a full range of amenities to ensure that the road to re-energising yourself leads straight back to your property.

Residents can enjoy the full trappings of contemporary pleasure at the facility floors on level 12 and 12A of Block B, accessible from Block A through a sky link bridge.

Take a rejuvenating break at the juice bar or coffeehouse, before sweating it out

at the 7738.39 square feet two-floor gym equipped with separate bathroom and spa amenities. Located inside the gym for maximum privacy, the high-ceiling infinity pool faces a breathtaking mountain view, fronting eastside for abundant morning sun and cooling shade in the evening. For gatherings and recreational activities, find your ideal spot in the open barbecue area, common park, multipurpose hall or cinema room.

Rencana Royale is primed as the first and most eminent condominium in the vicinity of Jalan Datuk Sulaiman, TTDI. Conveniently linked to major expressways such as SPRINT, Lebuhraya Damansara-Puchong (LDP), Duta-Ulu Kelang Expressway (DUKE) and Penchala Link, the area is relatively jam-free while being close to major shopping destinations such



Pool view

as 1 Utama, The Curve, Publika, Mont Kiara and more. In addition, feeder bus services are available from the nearby Komersial Datuk Sulaiman connecting to the TTDI MRT station.

Not that residents will need to venture far for the basic necessities, given that the Rencana Royale already has retail lots and a vast food court, mini-market, and cafe in the planning, as well as kid-friendly spaces for the convenience of working families.

The equally luxurious innards of the Rencana Royale will also impress owners, respectfully tailored and designed to meet the needs of the modern Malay gentleman or family. Clean, spacious, classy - the adjectives just roll off one's tongue when describing the layouts and finishes of the Rencana Royale's suites. The Executive Suites have a built-up area of 472 sf with a studio layout, while the duplex configuration of the Executive suites offer a built-up area of 875 sf with two bathrooms, two rooms, and a loft, complete with a trio key system that will help owners to gain value from their investment. The Deluxe Suites provide an option for families aspiring to expand, with a modern and tasteful layout that spans 1109sf. Those who are looking for the privilege of space can opt for the duplex units, which range from 1830sf to 1841sf. The units are also built and configured to allow owners to switch between own use or rental, a unique feature of Rencana Royale that will allow owners to gain a return on investment while still enjoying their space.

For corporations looking to claim a premiere address and an office that conveys prestige and power, the Rencana Royale offers Corporate Suites In the Sky - 3-storey units spanning a massive 5425sf perched on the 13th floor of the development. All units come with private elevators and separate parking access. This will lend your business not just the image



Façade of Rencana Royale

of prestige, but also one of exclusivity and privacy that is bound to impress any visitor as they look out from your private pool and garden to gaze at the hustle and bustle of the city.

A TIMELESS LANDMARK

Speaking of the view, with few buildings climbing high enough to hinder the horizon, the Rencana Royale stands out as a landmark. Because a landmark can be defined as not only a distinguishing feature of the landscape but also as a marker for a pivotal turning point, the case can be made that the Rencana Royale is, in fact, the turning point of what the Malay community has been looking for. As a landmark of a better quality of life for those who aspire to nothing but the best, the property provides value to its surroundings and benefits the community as a whole, making its immediate neighbourhood an investment opportunity for the enterprising spirit.

As a physical presence, the Rencana Royale is not lacking as a landmark either. Rising above the neighbourhood as a sleek, modern interpretation of how the ideal property should look like, the building embraces current-day trends, with tall windows framing each unit as your view follows the property's two towers upwards before reaching the bridging facility floor that spans across both towers. The sleek exterior will serve to attract eyes, wondering if they too can own such a piece of property, one that commands attention.



Bungalow with pool

Rencana Royale, with units starting at a very competitive price of RM298,000 onwards. Taking into account the location, amenities, and the community, it is clear that as an asset, a suite at the Rencana Royale is one of the best investments in Taman Tun Dr Ismail. In fact, the property already boasts two awards from *Property Insight*, winning the awards for Best Leisure Living Development and Best Hybrid Development at the 2016 Property Insight Prestigious Developer Awards as a testament to the quality of the Rencana Royale.

CK East is a boutique developer with a mission and vision to build quality and affordable homes, with two completed projects and another three on the way. CK East prides itself on being an all-levels builder capable of taking on almost all types of residential and commercial projects with fine attention to details. And as far as excellence goes? Rencana Royale stands as a proud monument to CK East's devotion to the idea of excellence - going above and beyond to not just meet, but exceed expectations.

AN INSIDE LOOK AT KOTA KEMUNING

By: Michelle Boon

Located 36 kilometres West of Kuala Lumpur City Centre, lies Kota Kemuning. A green and vibrant enclave just minutes away from Shah Alam and closer still to Klang, Kota Kemuning is a 1,854-acre integrated township developed by HICOM-Gamuda, a strategic partnership between DRB-HICOM Berhad and Gamuda Berhad.

The development of Kota Kemuning first began in 1995, more than two decades ago, and was envisioned to be a township that epitomises quality living, supported by a sustainable master plan that incorporates quality products, amenities and infrastructure. Each residential component is designed with its own unique character, cultivating a harmonious living environment whilst its retail and office spaces are built to exude a sense of intimacy with the green spaces creating a vibrant work-leisure balance.

Ngan Chee Meng, Chief Executive Officer of Gamuda Land says that Kota Kemuning was first conceptualised in 1995. "The first phase of Kota Kemuning was launched in 1996 and handed over in 1998. 20 years down the road, Kota Kemuning is now a thriving self-sustained township featuring a 22-acre wetland park, a community mall known as Gamuda Walk, a place where people can spend their evenings and weekends getting to know each other as a community as well as the international standard golf course Kota Permai Golf & Country Club. This was made possible with mindful town planning." He adds, "when we plan our towns, we not only think of the home place but also the play place,

park place, work place, shopping and eating place as well as infrastructure and connectivity. When we get these places right, the town works."

Kota Kemuning is Gamuda Land's maiden property development undertaking. With KESAS Highway being developed by Gamuda Land's sister company, Gamuda Engineering back then, the developer saw the opportunity in the area as it creates ease of accessibility from Petaling Jaya and Subang Jaya to Kota Kemuning all the way to Shah Alam and Klang.

Furthermore, according to Ngan, with the rapid population growth in Subang Jaya in the mid-90s, it was a strategic decision to venture into Kota Kemuning and that decision has proven fruitful.

Since its inception 24 years ago, Kota Kemuning has developed into a unique hub for living, dining, working and playing driven by the designs of its precincts and the green areas surrounding it making it one of the most sought-after townships in the Klang Valley.

Ngan says that Kota Kemuning township has matured over the years with a population of over 100,000 and is still growing.

"It is also steadily gaining traction as the upcoming suburban hotspot with key property developers entering the area in recent years due to easy connectivity via direct access to KESAS Highway and Elite Highway that adds to the appeal of Kota Kemuning." He adds that Gamuda Land sees opportunity for further growth in Kota Kemuning due to its strategic location and various offerings in both residential



as well as commercial components, which will further enhance the lifestyle of the community here. For example, the Quayside Mall in our new mixed-development, twentyfive.7, will bring in the first cinema within a 10km radius of the area as well as many popular F&B outlets, grocer and placemaking initiatives (the Buzz.ar at twentyfive.7) to enliven the place."

CURRENT ATTRACTIONS

Kota Kemuning is part of a 4,000-acre larger development of the Guthrie Corridor. Included in the project is a privatised highway and six integrated townships including Bukit Jelutong. This much larger plan was envisioned to become a benchmark for future townships moving forward in terms of infrastructure, community building, identity as well as safety and security. Kota Kemuning strives to offer a variety of housing types and public facilities, retail and office. Being in close proximity to three major highways including the North South Expressway Central Link (ELITE), Shah Alam Expressway (KESAS) highway and the Kemuning-Shah Alam highway (LKSA) highway, with connectivity to Shah Alam, Subang Jaya, USJ, Petaling Jaya, Puchong, Cyberjaya and Putrajaya has enabled Kota Kemuning to become a highly-populated, highly-utilised area which has opened itself to new opportunities like



transport-oriented activities and industrial enterprises.

Among the key attractions of Kota Kemuning is the Bukit Kemuning Golf & Country Resort and the award-winning Kota Permai Golf & Country Club which is the hallmark of the township. The Kota Permai Golf & Country Club provides a resort-style setting with an international standard 18-hole golf course designed by Ross Watson, a world-renowned golf course designer. Among its other key features include the Gamuda Walk mall, modern infrastructure and facilities, multipurpose halls, kindergartens, a mosque, primary and secondary schools, large open spaces and parks. Other attractions include the Central Lake, Wetland Park and Hill Park.

The Central Lake is one of Kota Kemuning's jewels with its vast green spaces, parks and lakes as well as its landscaped gardens. Up to 45% of the area has been allocated to green space, providing the residents with a healthy living and leisure environment with its eight-kilometre walkway that weaves in between the neighbourhoods linking the residential areas and the parks together. The 25-acre park surrounding the lake also offers the Lakeside Drive, a stunning area overlooking the lake promoting leisure and wellness for the township's residents.

The Wetland Park is Kota Kemuning's 22-acre, award winning parkland with

a tropical wilderness theme. It has now become a habitat for a variety of bird species as well as the perfect location for a plethora of flora and fauna. It was converted from a swamp land by Gamuda Land into what is now one of the most vibrant areas in Kota Kemuning. The Wetland Park is not only a place for residents to relax and enjoy the scenery, but also as a place to educate young, curious minds on the importance of conservation and exploration. In 2003, the Wetland Park received two awards; the Landscape Planning Award by the Singapore Institute of Landscape Architecture and the Urban Redevelopment, Conservation and Rehabilitation Award by the Malaysian Institute of Planners.

The Hill Park in Kota Kemuning is set on top of a hill in the township. It spans three acres and was built around existing green space, carefully preserved for the benefit of future residents that would someday call Kota Kemuning home. The lush and mature greenery includes a jogging trail, reflexology path, timber lookout deck and a gazebo. The Hill Park received the Landscape Community Park award by the State Government of Selangor in 2003.

Kota Kemuning is also made up of various precincts, either developed by Gamuda itself, or through sale of land to other developers looking to realise the township into what it had been envisioned during the early days of planning. There are

four main residential precincts including the south golf precinct, north golf precinct, hillcourt precinct and garden precinct. There are no less than 26 neighbourhoods in these four precincts; each of which are named after special locations, landscape features, water features, home designs and nature.

Among the precincts of Kota Kemuning, include Kota Kemuning Hills, an exclusive gated residential component nestled atop a lush, green hill. This precinct is designed and developed on the highest point of the township and overlooks the extraordinary views of Kota Permai Golf & Country Club. The residential units sit among verdant greenery which is combined with a lush tropical setting, offering home owners privacy and luxury. The masterplan ensures the uniqueness of its green space is retained to provide continuous 'hilltop character' and special efforts were taken to maintain the naturally undulating landscape of Kota Kemuning Hills. Its amenities include 12 acres of parkland and landscaped gardens as well as a 2.8 kilometre perimeter trail enveloping the surrounding area and a 1.2 kilometre parkway located right in the middle of Kota Kemuning Hills.

Another precinct is Bandar Botanic, a parkland township complete with a botanical garden that spans 80 acres. The township is signified by a central lake and park which stretches 3 kilometres across

the precinct and acts as the central theme of it. The park itself entwined into the neighbourhood and offers a football field, basketball court, a 7 kilometre jogging track and walking track, green belts and parks.

Valencia is another exclusive gated residential enclave within Kota Kemuning. The development spans 280 acres of lush greenery, lakes and a 9-hole, residents-only golf course complete with a community club and village square.

According to Gamuda Land, for Kota Kemuning, their effort to enhance nature's beauty is driven by their belief of creating eco-friendly environments where communities can learn to live with the delicate beauty of nature.

"This practice guides our team to be sensitive in thought and conscientious in action. We stand firm to the rule of enhancing the environment and this is a critical factor during the concept planning and design stages." They added that a combination of creativity and eco-friendly engineering is applied to the challenges of preserving and retaining the existing terrain and its surroundings.

"Creative environmental architecture has designed generous landscaping, abundant parks, lakes and water features to provide green and natural living environments. Kota Kemuning is built with a signature nature feature and close to 45% of land is dedicated to green lungs, parks, lakes and open spaces."

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Among the other large developers that have invested into Kota Kemuning include Tropicana Corporation Berhad and EcoWorld Development Group Berhad.

Tropicana Urban Homes by Tropicana Corporation Berhad is a series of affordable condominium units that will be offered to middle income buyers and will be introduced within its Tropicana Aman township in Kota Kemuning. Tropicana Aman will be launching approximately 3,000 units with a Gross Development Value (GDP) of RM1.3 billion and with sizes ranging between 650 sq ft to 1,000 sq ft priced at RM300,000 and RM500,000.

Eco Sanctuary by EcoWorld is a gated and guarded eco-themed development offering residents a rejuvenating nature environment in a modern setting. Eco Sanctuary is a 308.7-acre leasehold project with a GDP of RM8 billion. It features seven precincts and a commercial hub offering residential and commercial properties including landed homes, mid to high-rise residences, shop offices, a strip mall and green spaces. There is also a clubhouse complete with modern architecture, swimming pool, timber deck and a glass-walled gym. The Grandezza, Eco Sanctuary's main component, is a collection of luxury homes comprises of semi-detached homes, zero-lot bungalow, bungalows and super bungalows with built-up ranging from 2,903 sq ft to 6,075 sq ft. Each unit of homes in Eco Sanctuary features a modern tropical setting and comes with a deep cantilevered balcony and linear garden measuring 30 ft to 100 ft along the back of the homes.

The latest offering in Kota Kemuning is Gamuda Land's own twentyfive.7, the latest integrated enclave within the township.

According to Ngan, "In 2017, we launched our new 257-acre mixed-development in Kota Kemuning called twentyfive.7 with a GDV of RM4.2 billion. With good accessibility and connectivity to different parts of KL, twentyfive.7 is an avant-garde designed lifestyle development with a vibrant Quayside where the community can come together and get to know each other. The name twentyfive.7 derived from the 257-acre where the development is sited. 257 is also a play on the phrase "24/7" which implies 24 hours, 7 days a week but 257 include an extra hour portraying the vibrancy of the development, a destination that is energetic, robust and lively throughout the day and night – living beyond 24/7 figuratively speaking. This theme permeates throughout the master plan, landscaping, new-to-market multi-facade with practical layout home typologies down to the fine grain of tenant mix at the waterfront commercial space, which is envisioned as a gathering place for people of all walks of life."

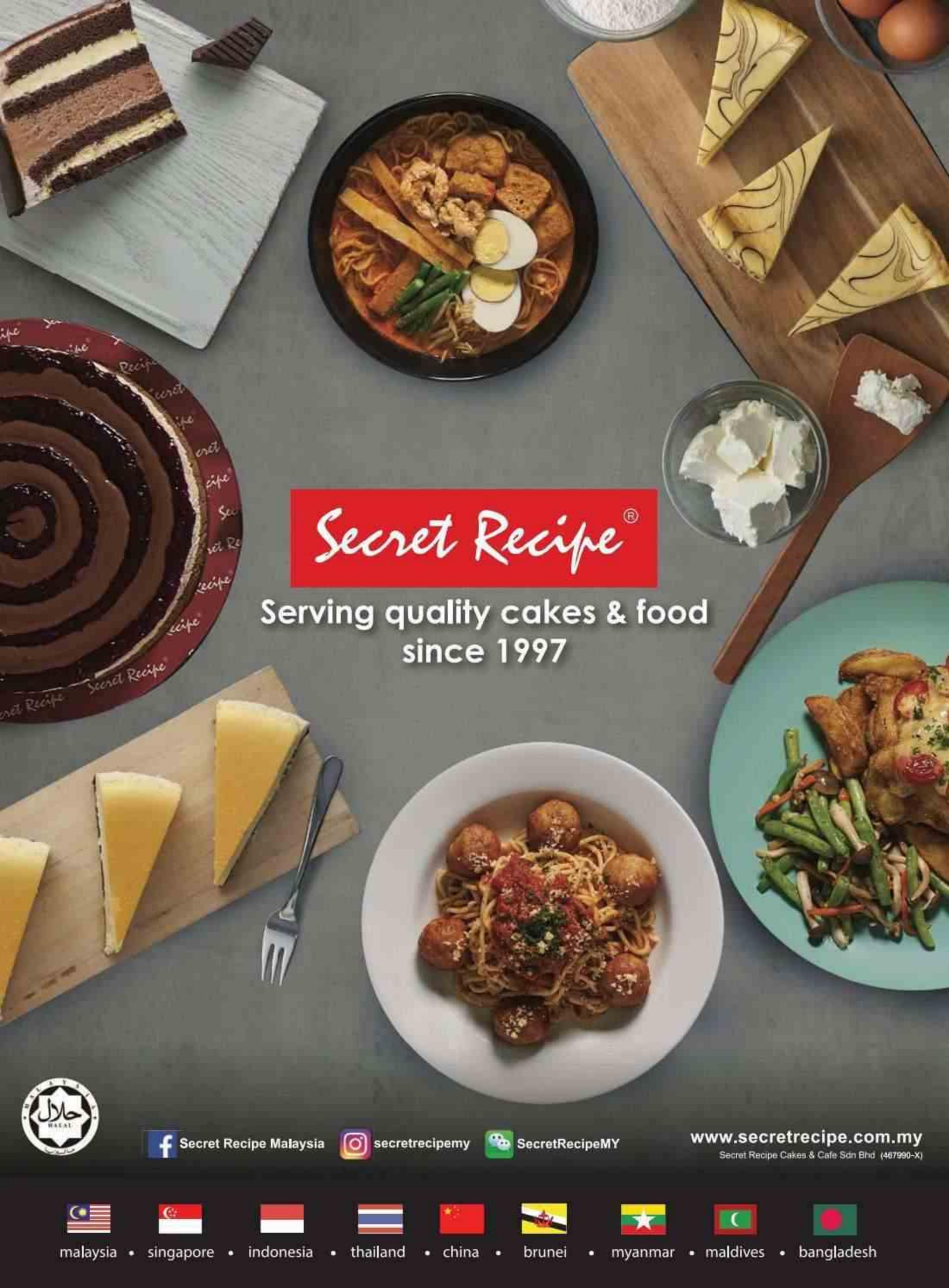
He adds that, "we have since launched landed homes comprising superlink as well as semi-detached homes and The Amber Residence Serviced Apartment to good take-up. In the pipeline is Luxura, our second phase of landed residences at twentyfive.7.

Built on 257 acres, Twentyfive.7 offers high rise units, semi-detached and super link homes. The landed units have a built up between 2,120 sq ft and 3,667 sq ft with a price of RM1.02 million and above. Twentyfive.7 offers more than 100 F&B outlets, entertainment hubs and a quayside mall. Its green space is meticulously designed for outdoor leisure complete with playgrounds and serene linear gardens that promote connectivity. The Quayside Mall's key tenants include MBO cinema, Jaya Grocer, Watsons and Guardian pharmacy.

When asked if the appreciation of prices have increased healthily, Ngan says, "Yes, with town-making done right, we have seen healthy capital appreciation in Kota Kemuning over the years. Landed development in Kota Kemuning recorded 132% capital appreciation over 10 years while condominium recorded 237% over five years." He also adds that the buyers in Kota Kemuning are mainly owner occupiers.

With Gamuda Land investing more projects in Kota Kemuning like twentyfive.7, which takes approximately 10 to 15 years to complete, Gamuda Land is continuing its legacy in the township. Ngan adds that Gamuda Land has created value for Kota Kemuning, not only in terms of capital appreciation but through the creation of community places, investment in township maintenance, landscaping as well as continuous enhancement of road, infrastructure and connectivity for the community of Kota Kemuning. "That is how we create sustainable value for our community to enhance their quality of life."

With all these recent developments, Kota Kemuning has come a long way from its inception in 1995 and is expected to keep the township growing in the next ten to twenty years.



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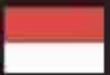
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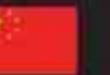
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ENERGY SAVING GADGETS

Device Picks & Tips

By: Jotham Lim

When will we ever start to conserve energy? The polar ice caps are melting, global warming is in effect, and species are going extinct at an unprecedented rate. However, nothing motivates us better to save and conserve energy more than our monthly electricity bill. Realistically speaking, energy efficiency is not top amongst the list of priorities we have as homeowners. But it is definitely a cost saver, so why not save our planet while we're at it?

We assume that you, as a first-time homebuyer, may have already spent an absurd amount of money on a brand new home. So, in addition to energy saving, we have factored in product affordability and reliability as well just to bring you the editorial picks for 10 energy (and cost) saving devices on the market.

SOLAR PANELS? OR NOT?

Why pay for electricity at all when you can generate your own? A home powered by solar energy is the obvious first choice when it comes to saving electricity. However, installing an entire solar ecosystem can be very expensive, and it cost about RM45,000 for a standard rooftop.

However, assuming that your general monthly energy consumption is about RM600-900, you can get your return on investment in 5 years. Plus, the government has introduced a solar leasing programme under the Supply Agreement for Renewable Energy (SARE) programme, where buyers can "buy solar panels as if you're buying a phone plan".

Another point to consider is that you can actually sell off excess solar energy back to TNB. Thanks to the Sustainable Energy Development Authority (SEDA) and its Feed-In-Tariff (FiT) programme, you can sell electricity to TNB at the same rate TNB is charging its consumers.

With so many factors involved, we still recommend that readers consult a professional to determine if solar powered energy is the right fit for your home.

AIR CONDITIONER - LG 1.0HP DUAL INVERTER DELUXE

Air-conditioners are one of the highest energy consumption devices in the household. However, LG's 5-star ratings for energy efficiency are not just for show. LG claims that its Dual Inverter Compressor will cool faster, last longer and run quieter, not to mention save energy by up to 70%.

LG has so much confidence in its products that the device is slapped with a 10-year warranty on the compressor. It also comes with an auto-clean function, and its trademarked Gold Fin technology provides corrosion resistance to the product.

For energy consumption, we have to give the spot to LG as your cheap and effective solution to beat the Malaysian forever summer.

STANDING FAN - MIDEA MF-16FS15F

We can't rely on air conditioners 24/7. That will somewhat defeat the purpose of this entire article, wouldn't it? This is where standing fans come into play.

The MIDEA MF-16FS15F is probably the property investor's crowd favourite. It is cheap, effective and easily transportable from one property to another. It comes with a 5 ABS Fan Blade design for better airflow control, and it has a 5-star energy rating, with an average energy consumption of 141 Kwj/kWh per year.

A standing fan is an excellent option for budget-friendly households or a cheap way to furnish a rental home without putting a massive dent in your pocket.

CEILING FAN - PANASONIC ECONAVI 4 BLADES

If standing fans take up too much space, or maybe you need a slight upgrade in quality of life, a good quality ceiling fan may be up your alley.

The Panasonic Econavi 4 Blades is the cheapest DC motor ceiling fan that we have surveyed so far. A DC motor is essential to effective power management, using as low as 3W power and a maximum of 41W. At only 286mm tall, this fan is perfect for rooms with low ceiling height.



Image courtesy: Solarvest



The fan also features the Econavi technology, which is an intelligent temperature sensor that auto adjusts the air velocity according to room temperature. No more fidgeting around the remote control every hour from now on.

WATER HEATER - JOVEN i90P

A warm shower is a great way to start your morning, but being electrocuted midway through is not. The i90P comes with an EELS system with a surge protector that will provide a barrier of protection against any unwanted accidents in the shower.

Like all devices, an inverter DC input

is the only way to go in order to save electricity cost. Thankfully, the i-series from Joven all features an inverter DC pump, specifically designed for optimum energy usage. We have decided on the i90P as our go-to-model for its sleek design, abundant features, and most importantly, its great value for money.

REFRIGERATOR - LG IEC GROSS 333L

There are plenty of reasons to love this refrigerator model. A 333L sized fridge is well suited to a family of five, and it comes with a decent price tag. With the trademarked Linear Cooling technology, the

compressor uses fewer components than a standard compressor system, significantly reducing energy lost in the process.

This model also features DoorCooling+ technology, which claims to cool the interior 35% quicker than conventional refrigerators. It is an investor's go-to investment option when it comes to furnishing any form of rentals.

WASHING MACHINE - LG T2109VS2M

An average household uses the washes 3 loads of laundry per week, and an average washing machine can last approximately 11 years. A washing machine would probably outlast most electronic appliances in the household, so it is worth putting a bit extra to acquire a decent quality one.

The LG T2109VS2M is a top-loading, 9kg capacity washing machine outfitted with the latest Smart Inverter Technology, allowing for more energy efficient cleaning. Its standby power feature ensures that minimal electricity is being used while the device is plugged in, even when it is not in use.

LIGHTING - PHILIPS

When it comes to lighting solutions for home usage, you can never go wrong with LED. Over the course of 25,000 hours, LED light bulbs will trump any other forms of lighting in terms of energy saving cost.

Due to different home specifications, we couldn't recommend any single lighting fixture for your specific home. However, we have picked the Philips brand over the others due to its wide range of products, and its reliability in use. In terms of Color Rendering Indexes

and product lifespan, you can never go wrong with Philips. With the launch of the new HUE lineup, users are also able to customise their lighting setup with a single flick of a smartphone.

The cost to install quality LED lights may be high upfront, but the returns in savings are unbeatable in the long run.

TELEVISION - SONY X75F

OLED TVs took the entire market by storm when they were first introduced. Its vibrant colours, gorgeous displays and deep blacks have made its way into the hearts of consumers. However, did you know that OLED consumes twice the amount of power than LED? Not to mention the exorbitant price tag that goes along with it.

Sometimes, you don't need the latest and the greatest, and you just need something that is "good enough". The Sony X75F LED TV is the best bang for your buck in terms of budget and the value you get in return. It features a 50-inch 4K HDR display, and it has SMART TV and Android TV functionality as well. With its ClearAudio+ technology, we doubt that there is a need to spend extra cash on a high-grade sound system either.

INTUITIVE HOME DESIGN

Sometimes, changing your electrical devices alone just couldn't cut it. To fully optimise your energy usage, smart and efficient home designs will come into play.

Many old and new developments have specially located water tank placements that will naturally warm up the water through sunlight alone, negating the need for water heaters during the daytime. Some contractors offer a building envelope sealing solution, to prevent cold air from escaping to the outside environment.

These are some of the examples of reducing and reusing energy through smart designs within the household. It is recommended that you consult a proper interior designer to determine what solutions fit best for your own personal needs.

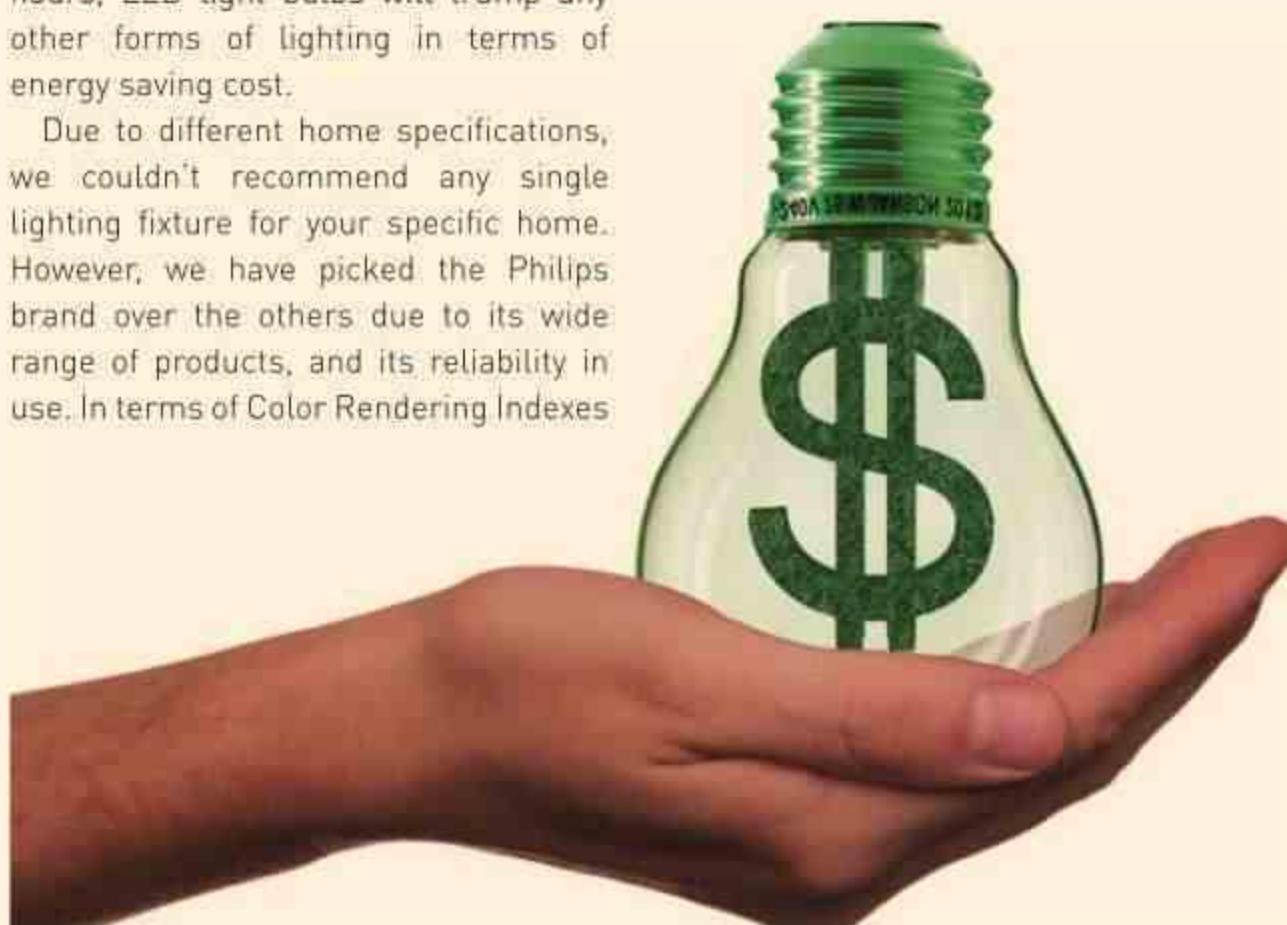
REDUCING HUMAN ERROR

At the end of the day, nothing saves more energy and utility costs than cold-hard discipline and constant monitoring.

Even something as rudimentary as turning off all devices that are not in use and unplugging them from the wall outlet can be hard to enforce in the long-term. Sometimes, it is just not practical to expend the time and effort to do so, and that is perfectly understandable. However, the least we can do is turn off the lights, fans and air conditioners before leaving the room to work wonders, and the compounded saving costs will slowly but surely add up.

CONCLUSION

Be clear with your objectives when you decide to cut down on energy usage. Is it to save the planet? Is it to reduce your utility costs? Regardless, thinking that saving energy is a luxury that only the rich and wealthy can afford to do is hugely misleading. Every one of us can play a role in reducing our carbon footprint. The real question that everyone should be asking is, where does energy saving fit into my list of priorities? And the answer will determine your actions and purchasing decisions in the end.





DESIGNING FOR SMALL SPACES

By: Jotham Lim

The property market has been taking an interesting turn in recent years. With home ownership being a significant obstacle to many, developers are looking for ways to make house prices affordable to the majority of the public. Many tactics have been used, such as developing projects with higher density, building projects in remote locations, etc. However, one of the more popular ways to reduce the total cost of home ownership is to develop homes with a smaller footprint. It is fairly common to witness the development of micro-suites, ranging from 450sq ft studio apartments, all the way to three bedrooms occupying only 650sq ft of space.

With so many micro-suites entering the market, it is slowly becoming a challenge trying to design for such tiny spaces. The editorial team at *Property Insight* has reached out to professional interior designer, Ms Aida Anis from Aideaspace, Aideahome & Mibs Studio, to get her thoughts on the situation and hopefully, disclose some tips and tricks for future and current micro-suite homeowners.

BACKGROUND

Ms Aida has been involved with interior designing for more than 15 years, leaving her mark in many major corporations in the industry. Her portfolio includes, but not limited to, major hotel brands such as Ritz Carlton, The Majestic Hotel, and even several niche projects such as Muzium Diraja Abu Bakar and Bursa Malaysia. She has a wide array of experience working with both private residential and commercial projects as well, with several of her projects hailing from Setia Alam, Bukit Tunku and Maluri Kuala Lumpur. It is safe to say that Ms Aida knows her stuff when it comes to designing and crafting space for comfort, practicality and more importantly, value for money.

How often do you get to work on projects with tiny, limited spaces?

It is not that often that I receive projects with such limited space because the general scale of my projects are RM50,000 and above. However, I have worked with developers on show units that are

personality of the month

sized between 700-800 sq ft. I have also consulted a client in Johor that is looking to furnish a 450 sq ft space as well.

But as a designer, there will never be enough space to express yourself creatively. I have once worked on a project that has a 2200 sq ft buildup, and even then you will start encountering spatial issues trying to come up with a practical design. Every home comes with its own challenges in terms of layout and space, and it is up to us to make full use of the space effectively. But all in all, I do not receive projects such as these, but I can confidently say that it can be done, depending on the design concept you are gunning for.

Smaller spaces are harder to design. True or false?

I would comfortably say that smaller spaces pose a more significant challenge when it comes to coming up with an effective design. The biggest issue you will face is storage and how do you plan on maximising it, because what available space that you have is what you will ever get. It is essential to ensure that the space used remains practical, in addition to taking care of the aesthetic design of it.

I would say that a measuring tape and a notebook is your best friend when designing for small spaces. You need to be really careful when selecting pieces of furniture for small spaces, and you need to measure the sizes accordingly. Your design choices will matter more, and you have less room to make mistakes.

When selecting furniture, you should opt for pieces of furniture that have dual or multiple functionalities. There are shoe cabinets that function as a bench, murphy beds that function both as a bed and a desk. Some study tables are movable, and you can insert them into the walls for safekeeping. There are plenty of smart designs imported from European countries that allow users to maximise space very effectively.

It is easy to design for daily necessities, but problems will arise if you have certain hobbies that take up plenty of space. I once had a client in Shah Alam whereby the director has a cycling hobby. He insists

that he must keep the bicycle in the office. Hence, we designed a wall mount that he can hang his bike on. Working with tiny space, every available space is precious, and you must tread lightly ensuring that each space serves a particular purpose.

Small spaces are relatively cheaper to furnish. True or false?

I would give this one a hard false. In fact, I would say that the design concept plays a more significant role in influencing the budget over the size of the space alone. First of all, it is important to realise that all furniture and finishes come with different grades of quality. A small space may require fewer materials to furnish, but one may argue that the money saved on purchasing fewer materials can be used to source for higher quality materials instead.

For example, I have an RM10,000 budget on laminated flooring. If I have a 1000 sq ft space, I may opt for a Grade C type of flooring, but I might opt for Grade A flooring if I were to furnish a 450 sq ft instead. We, as interior design consultants, work very carefully within the budget that was given to us, and sometimes

compromise is necessary in order to fulfil all the design objectives while still remain within budget.

Bigger spaces are always more comfortable to stay in compared to small spaces. True or false?

Yes definitely. Having more space does give you plenty of breathing room, not to mention the ability to play around with different design concepts and options. However, I would like to put forth a disclaimer and say that it is also possible for small spaces to achieve the same level of comfort as does large spaces, albeit needing a bit more effort.

Interior designers are problem solvers. There are many minute details that we have picked up over the years of designing that most clients are unable to identify. There are unique ways to save space, to make an area feel more comfortable or visually cleaner. For big spaces, you can go wild and crazy in terms of design, but you need to be disciplined for small spaces. Everything must be planned carefully and well measured, and you need to strike the perfect balance between need and want,

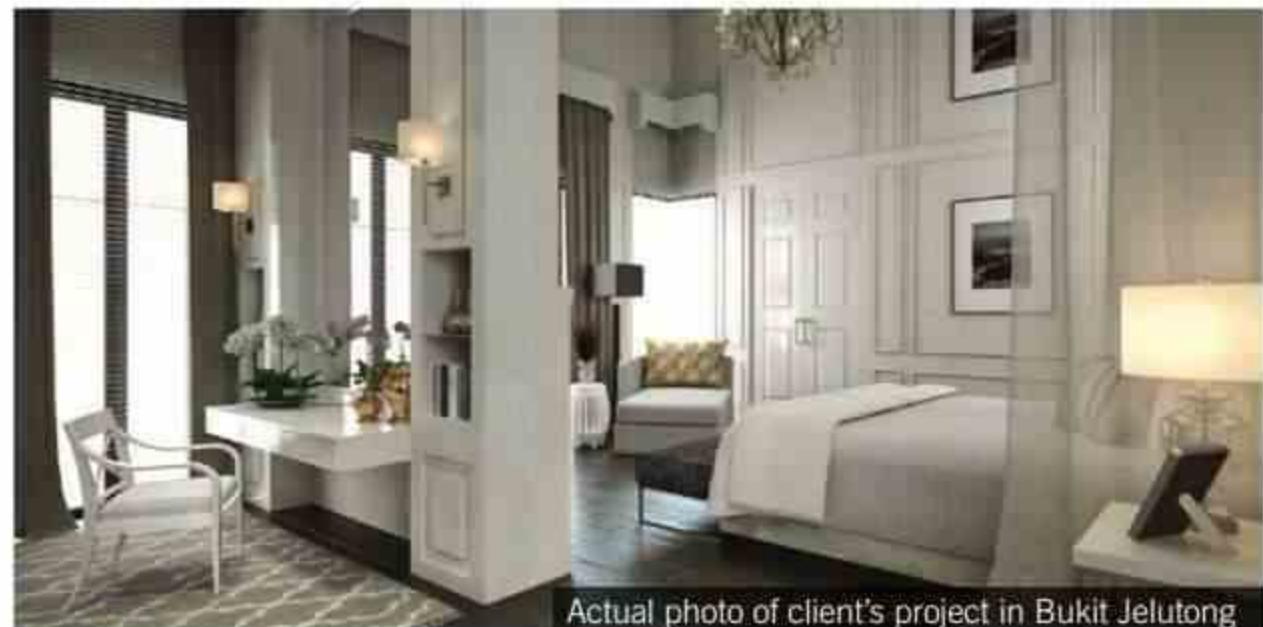


and how to get the best of both worlds.

Which sections of the home should you never cheap out on, and conversely, which space can you save money on?

I can never stress this enough, but never cheap out on the kitchen. During the cooking process, you will be handling oils, water, raw food and ingredients, and it is very easy to get the space dirty and messy. You need to source for high durability and toxic-free materials for your kitchen space. The last thing you need is to have the corners chipped off, wallpaper stained and warped after a year of use due to inadequate material sourcing, and you will eventually spend more in repairs than you would do on sourcing for high-grade materials.

For me, the best place to dig out extra savings would be in the bedroom. For bedrooms, the goal is to create a space that is cosy and easy to rest in. A good bed with proper carpentry, night lighting and good wall paint are the only elements you need for a comfortable bedroom. For cabinets, there are plenty of cheap yet durable options. There are also plenty of items in



Actual photo of client's project in Bukit Jelutong



Actual photo of client's project in Bukit Tunku

the bedroom in which you don't need easy access to, like winter clothing or luggage, where you can store away quietly.

I also notice that many new homeowners spend too much effort furnishing bathrooms, which is strange because the bathrooms of newly developed units are generally already well-furnished. Unless you are buying a sub-sale unit that has aged for quite a while, I see no reason to spend extra money hacking bathroom walls and re-outfitting them.

What tips do you have for homeowners looking to DIY design their small spaces?

The DIY scene has been picking up steam in recent years, due to the countless tutorials available online. For homeowners looking to embark on the DIY journey, I would recommend that you paint your own walls. It is an affordable way to change the entire look of the

space, and it is reasonably easy to do it yourself. If you know how to sew your own curtains, I would highly recommend you do so as it is a great cost saver. Finally, wainscoting is a great and cheap way to add sophistication to your walls. If you are in any trouble or have any doubts, there is no shame in consulting with an interior designer.

We understand that selecting and purchasing a home is an ordeal by itself, and it can be overwhelming trying to furnish a bare unit from scratch. But here at *Property Insight*, we urge homeowners to relax and enjoy the designing process. Planning and furnishing your brand new home should be an enjoyable experience, as it is the most creative portion of the home purchasing process. Whether it is for investment or own stay, we hope that you, our readers, are able to furnish your space effectively to cater to your own personalised, individualistic needs.



INSERT PROPERTY “TITLE” HERE

By: Jotham Lim

Conventionally, when you think of commercial properties, retail stores, office spaces; brick and mortars pop into mind. Conversely, residential titles are associated with condominiums, flats, apartments, bungalows, etc.

However, ever since people have started buying and selling land, the distinction between these two titles—Residential and Commercial—has been muddled. There are always exceptions, exemptions, and unclear boundaries when it comes to what you can and cannot do with your property.

Ever more so with the new breed of properties emerging in the market. Studios, SoHos, SoVos, SoFos, serviced apartments are what we call “mixed developments.” These are not exactly new concepts, but the definitions of residential and commercial titles have been increasingly obscure.

More often than not, the land title of a new particular project is not predominantly displayed in advertisements and promos. Today, *Property Insight* will be exploring the differences between these two titles and explore how mixed developments fit into the picture.

RESIDENTIAL TITLE

In simplified terms, properties with residential titles are meant for living and/or residing in only. On paper, residents are not allowed to conduct any business on the premises in any way shape or form.

When it comes to utilities and infrastructure, residential rates are typically cheaper than commercial rates. Electricity bills for residential properties can go as low as half the rate as commercial properties despite the same usage.

In mid-2018, *The Edge Market* has reported that half of Malaysian jobholders are still earning less than RM2000 a



month, thus saving up for the down payment becomes a huge barrier to purchasing a property for most people. However, first time home buyers looking to buy a residential property are allowed a Loan-To-Value (LTV) ratio of 90%. Residential home buyers are also entitled to many benefits provided by the government, banks and developers, with some programmes offering low to zero down payment.

From an investment point of view, rental yields for residential properties are typically lower than commercial properties. Managing residential properties also requires much more active management including constant monitoring, not to mention the added risk of encountering bad tenants. There are plenty of horror stories of investors trying to deal with problematic tenants defaulting on rent, and vandalising furniture and the property itself. It is definitely something that should be factored in for an investment decision.

Renting out residential properties generally has a higher turnover. Contracts usually last for one or two years, and periods of vacancies should be factored in

as well. There are a few ways around this, such as renting out individual rooms for more profit. You may also consider renting out the property to corporations looking to house their workers. Broadly speaking, corporations are much more trustworthy than individual tenants, because corporate entities are easier to hold accountable legally and they are less likely to disappear without a trace.

COMMERCIAL TITLE

Strictly speaking, commercial titled properties are only meant to house businesses. Meaning, you aren't allowed to cook on the premises (unless you have dedicated licences), all properties must adhere to stricter fire safety policies, and you are unable to host a party on the premises.

As mentioned, utility bills, assessment costs and quit rent are priced higher for commercial properties. Loan financing can range from 80-85% with relatively higher interest rates, and you are unable to withdraw from your Employees Provident Fund's (EPF) second account to finance the property.

On the upside, commercial projects offer better rental yields, more so if you decide to run with a creative concept for your property such as opening a co-working space for example. Seeing that you are renting out properties to businesses, you can expect stable tenants, with contracts that have longer leases lasting between two to ten years, even more if the property is heavily renovated for the business specific use.

It is easier to take legal action against a business compared to an individual if they have defaulted on their payment or have broken the terms of the agreement. If you can manage to secure an anchor tenant or a strong franchise, it is a potential goldmine of an investment.

MIXED DEVELOPMENTS

As with all things in life, there will always be exceptions to everything. SoHos and serviced apartments are built on top of commercial zones but fall under the jurisdiction of the Housing Development (Control and Licensing) Act 1966 (HDA).

Under the HDA, these units are able to be used for dwelling and business purposes simultaneously, albeit in a heavily restrictive manner. They are also entitled to certain government benefits and have a once in a lifetime exemption on the Real Property Gains Tax (RPGT). Discuss with your agent or consult the utility company directly to determine if your utility rates are treated as commercial or residential by default. Owners can opt to convert to residential rates provided that they can prove that no business is being conducted within the property.

Do note that SoVo, SoLo, SoFo and any "So" in a similar nature do not fall under the purview of the HDA as they are primarily intended for office use. Commercial and residential titles also come attached with different sets of Sales and Purchase agreements, so it is essential to read the fine print and clarify with your agent properly.

Outside of mixed developments, many, including myself, have always wondered "is it possible to open a cafe in my living room?" The short answer is no. It is

highly unlikely that you are able to do so. However, Majlis Bandaraya Petaling Jaya has allowed certain residential areas to be turned into "limited commercial use", namely the SS2 area, Jalan Universiti, and Jalan Gasing.

Limited commercial use allows for a narrow selection of businesses to conduct their operations on the premises, such as art galleries, agencies, and homes for the elders. For those who are toying with the idea of opening up a business from your own home, please do consult your local city council to clarify if the property is fit for commercial usage.

WHY THE RAPID CHANGES IN THE INDUSTRY?

The sudden wave of mixed development projects sprouting across Klang Valley did not exist without reason. Consumer behaviours are changing, and mixed development projects are there to satisfy those needs. Let's dive into the mind of a potential buyer and figure out the factors that attribute to his or her purchase decisions.

Affordability

In retrospect, small sized mixed development projects are relatively cheaper than traditional three-bedroom-two-restroom units (3R2B). Recent findings show that Malaysian homes are amongst the largest by global standards, with an average of 1264 sq ft. Which begs the question, is it really necessary to fork out extra cash for the added space?

Paying RM350,000 for a 450 sq ft studio apartment would be considered a bad investment to some, but considered luxurious to others. However, servicing a RM1500 monthly payment requires significantly less commitment compared to an RM2000 one, not to mention the additional miscellaneous costs.

Jobs and Careers

Freelancing has increasingly become a more substantial contributor to the Malaysian economy. The latest statistics by the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) suggests that Malaysia is the third largest

freelancing market in the global region.

We have slowly seen an increase in startups, small scale entrepreneurs, freelancers, remote workers etc., all requiring a working space not far from home, removing the need to travel and additional costs. For those who wish to set up their own business with a proper business address, a SoHo is a great option.

Privacy and Cohabitation

Consider the alternative. Let us assume that you are a young professional looking to buy your very first home with a limited budget, and opted for a 3R2B set-up instead of a mixed development.

To service the loan, you choose to rent out your remaining two rooms as you have no intention of occupying them anytime soon. With such a decision, comes a whole ordeal of finding tenants, drafting a tenancy agreement, calculating utility cost distribution, vacancy period, and so much more.

Some people may prefer not to dabble into the complicated matters of being a landlord this early on, as there are other priorities in life. Many value their privacy very much as well, and if the space is too restrictive, they can always opt to rent a larger apartment, while putting my studio up for rent instead.

Friends and family will nag and push you for a larger space, as it is better value for money, and it is easier to start a family that way. But Cohabitation with strangers may not be right for everybody as everybody has different objectives and goals in life.

IS IT A FACTOR THAT I SHOULD CARE ABOUT?

When all is said and done, I will confidently say that yes, the title of the property is definitely a determining factor when it comes to any home buying or investment decision. Knowledge is power, and it does not hurt to learn the ins and outs of the property you are purchasing, especially for a purchase that you have to pay for most of your life.

METAL ROOFING - THE LATEST TREND FOR HOMES

A sit-down conversation with Dato' Kiat Tung

By: Jotham Lim

There has been leaps and bounds in the advancement of building and building techniques in recent years, so much so that it is fairly hard to keep track with all the latest technological development in the sector. However, today we will tackle a topic that has not been given the attention it deserves - Roofing solutions, and how much of a role it plays into energy conservation efforts.

The editorial team at *Property Insight* has had the opportunity to chat with renowned architect, Dato' Kiat Tung from T&T Architect to get his professional insights on this topic. Dato' Kiat has decades of experience working on both commercial and residential projects, and his portfolio consists of many development projects from big names developers such as EcoWorld, SP Setia and Gamuda. If you have recently bought properties from said developers, it has most likely be given the magic touch from Dato' Kiat.

From your personal experience, how much of a priority do homeowners place on energy conservation?

It is sad to say, but eco-friendliness is at the bottom of the list for residential projects. Many other important factors play a more prominent role in influencing a buyer's purchasing decisions, like location, pricing, rental rates. Moreover, solar installations are much more beneficial to homeowners with landed properties as opposed to high-rise projects. In addition to the relatively cheap cost of energy here in Malaysia, it is

understandable why energy conservation is not given the level of attention it needed in the residential sector.

However, the opposite is true for commercial properties. For commercial spaces like office complexes and shopping malls, energy upkeep costs can inflate to absurdly high numbers, and businesses are much more incentivised to search for greener solutions to reduce their upkeep costs. For certain multi-national corporations, energy conservation is also baked into the ISO requirements, making energy conservation a must.

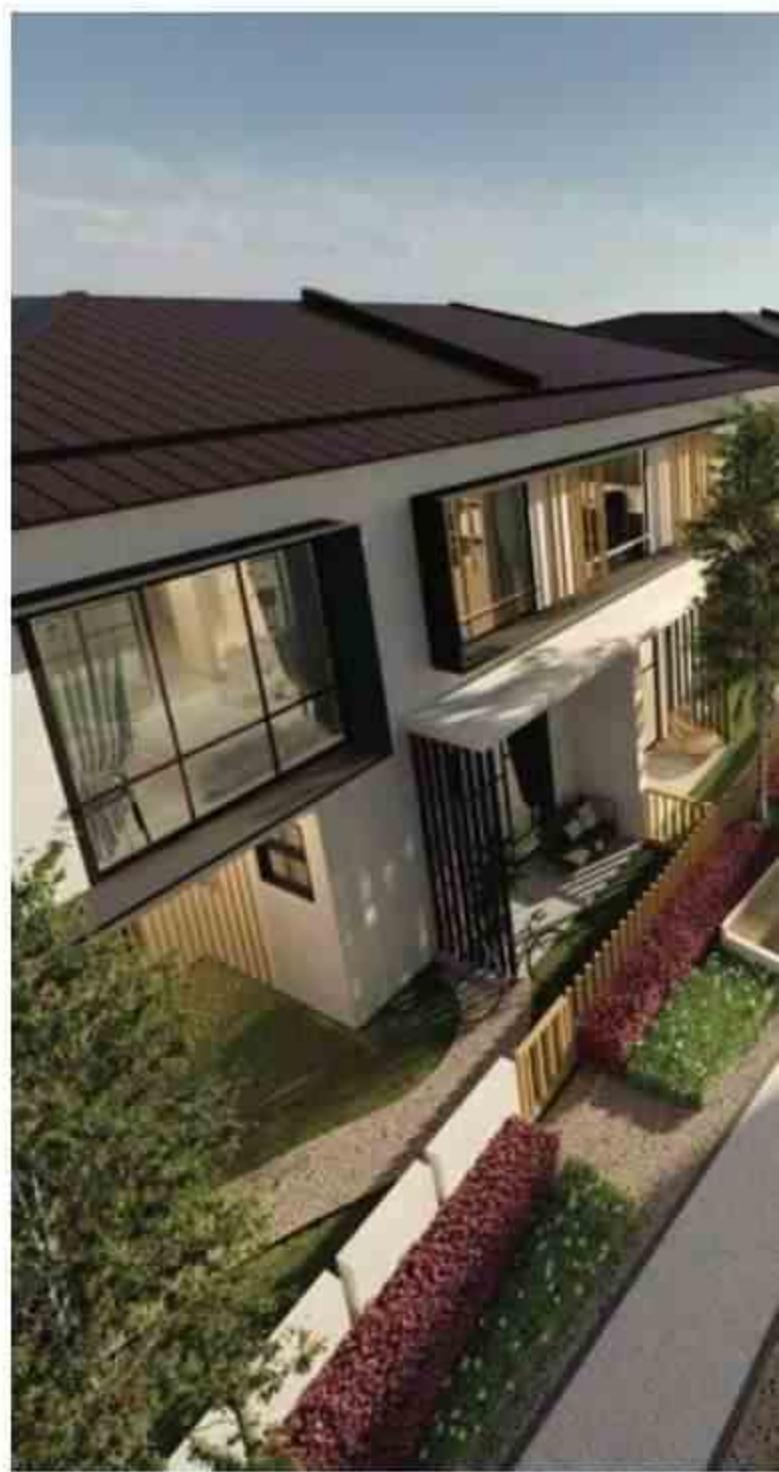
For roofing solutions, what are the options currently available on the market, and how do they compare?

For roofing materials, there are too many options available to list down. But for the sake of simplicity, the commonly used ones on the market are Reinforced Concrete Flat Roof (RC flat roof) and steel/metal roofing.

RC flat roof has always been the traditional option, and it is the most widely used roofing solution here in Malaysia. However, there has been a rising trend of using metal roofing as a modern alternative to RC flat roof. From my personal working experience, I would say about 30% of current projects have resorted to using metal roofs, and there are plenty of reasons for them to do so.

Traditional RC flat roofs need additional waterproofing treatments, but most water-proofing solutions have a limited lifespan. Having a metal roof is one of the solutions to this problem. Metal roofing

is also fairly durable, easy to install, and great for security. Whenever we mention metal or steel roofing, people do tend to picture cheap, low-grade zinc roofing you find in low-cost dwellings. However, there are plenty of creative ways you can play around with the material to make it



aesthetically pleasing.

Metal roofs have the unique ability to achieve a very low pitch, making it look almost flat. Moreover, there is a shift in building techniques in recent years. Many developers are now adopting the Industrialized Building System (IBS), whereby construction materials are being transported pre-installed and is outfitted as is. Metal roofs fit perfectly in the pipeline, as they are prefabricated in the factory and is less labour intensive to install.

This is in comparison to concrete roofing, which finds itself hard to adapt to this new construction workflow, as concrete is generally cured and harden on the spot.

It seems that you have an immense interest in metal roofing. Care to share more?



I would like to put forth a disclaimer and say that no material is perfect, and each material has its place in every design concept. Even for something as simple as metal roofing, there is a wide array of different grades of the same product to suit the various different price ranges. There are also inferior metal roofing in the market that rust easily within a short span of time and don't have the proper coatings as well.

The biggest downsides to using metal roofing would be its insulation and acoustics. However, these problems can be easily solved using proper insulation and soundproofing techniques. Workmanship is also another essential factor to consider. Metal roofing is a great material against leakage, but it may occur from time to time due to bad workmanship or a really low pitch design.

Currently, more and more houses designed are moving towards modern architecture, hence we are inclined towards using metal roofs. As architects, we also encourage diversity in our selection of materials. Metal roofing, I would say is a modern aesthetic, and I like to mix and match different roofing materials to give the project a unique and diverse look that is hard to emulate elsewhere.

It is said that metal roofing is an excellent option for energy conservation. Can you please elaborate more on that?

Metal roofing, in general, is much more eco-friendly than traditional forms of materials such as concrete and shingles. The reason being that metal is a highly recyclable material, which is great for reducing our carbon footprint.

There are plenty of metal roofs in the market that is made out of recycled materials. Metal roofing is also less wasteful when compared to other types of materials, as scraps can be easily melted down to produce even more roofing material.

Metal roofing, by itself, is also recyclable as well. For old or abandoned projects looking to be demolished, instead of throwing the roofing along with the rest

of the rubble, the metal roofing can be recycled for other, newer projects on the market. Although the simple switch in material usage for roofing may not seem like much, the benefits do add up and compound in the long run. Until the day comes where concrete is recyclable, it is hard to beat metal roofing in the eco-friendliness department.

There are plenty of metal roofing options available on the market. How do you pick and select the type of metal roofing used on your projects?

I have been exploring COLORBOND, a product by BlueScope, as it is a good roofing choice due to its durability and resistance against staining. If the client has no particular preference, COLORBOND has always been the safe, go-to solution for roofing for many of my projects.

I would also like to highlight that it is important to insulate the metal roof because the majority of the heat in a property is transmitted via the roof. Proper insulation will provide a much more cooling environment, which will also reduce energy consumption.

Speaking of which, COLORBOND provides high thermal efficiency as well. With the correct colour combination, it can reflect solar heat during bright sunny days, reducing the need to keep the air-conditioning running at full blast.

Any final thoughts you would like to share in regards to roofing solutions?

I would like to share that, as an architect, picking out the roofing material is an immensely stressful decision, even more so than designing for window locations. Yes, window placement does play a significant role in energy consumption and is highly dependant on the sun direction and design. However, the roof is the most prominent factor when it comes to property heat management. Hence, for any energy conservation attempts, it is great to first start with the roof. If the opportunity presents itself, why not give metal roofing a try?

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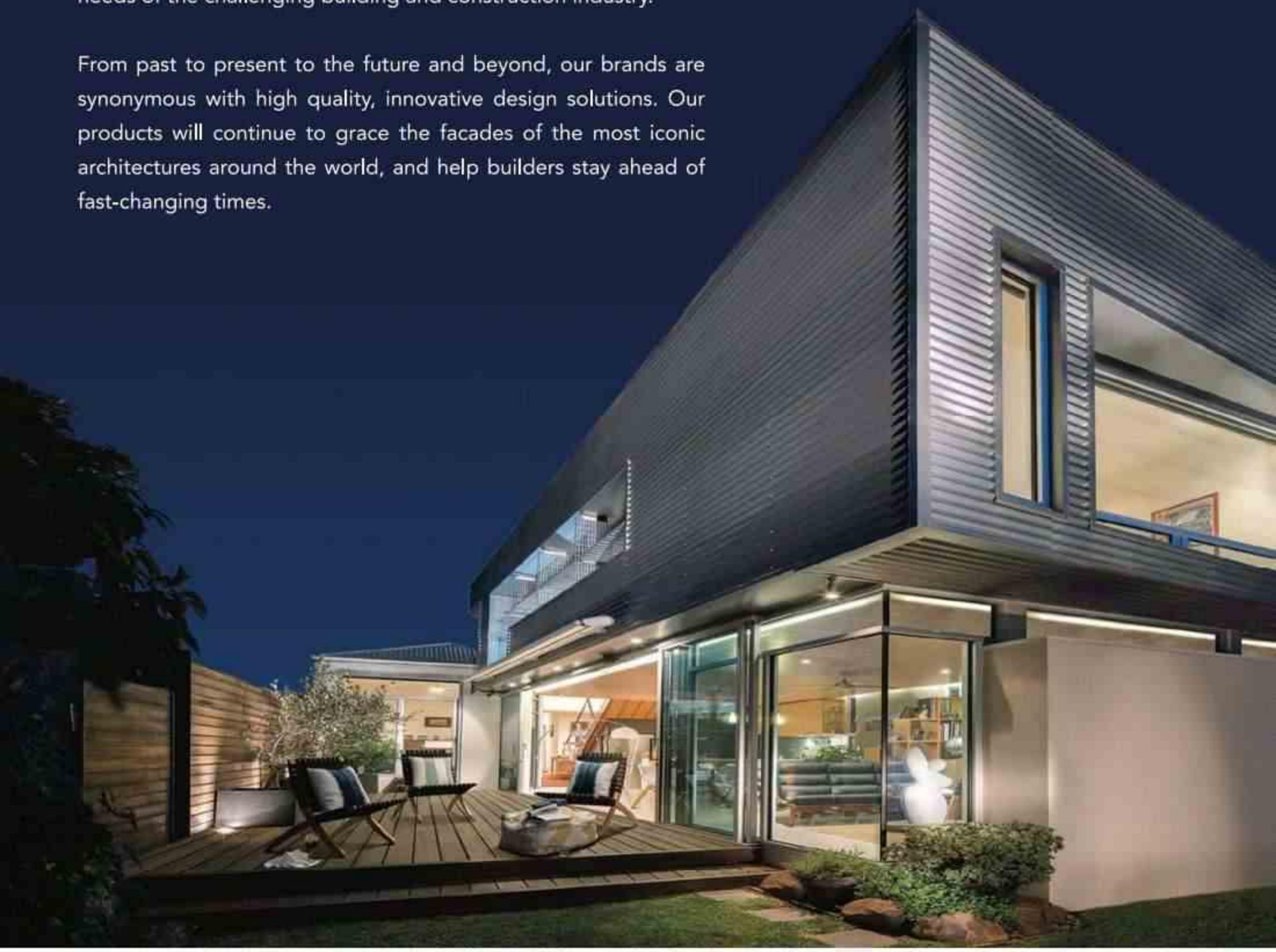

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