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Enabling a better life



FIRST TIME'S THE CHARM

GSH Co ventures into Klang Valley's residential segment with the launch of Eaton Residences

Winter is coming

WHILE George RR Martin's celebrated clarion call to action obviously requires some poetic licence to apply to Malaysia's tropical climes, its figurative meaning is as relevant today to the frosty consumer sentiment prevalent in the domestic sector and conflicting agendas of developers, construction players, government authorities and property seekers as it is to the fictional kingdoms of Westeros.

The most recent plot twist in the ongoing saga of the country's property industry is a Sept 8 suggestion put forth by the Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Ministry allowing developers to provide loans to purchasers at interest rates ranging from 12% to 18%. The controversial proposal, which is currently under review, has drawn concerns from numerous quarters regarding its potential impact on Malaysia's financial health and household debt levels.

Similar programmes have seen success on a smaller scale in the past, such as Sunway Bhd's Property Certainty Campaign, which guaranteed financing of up to 88% for eligible applicants, but the ramifications of more widespread implementation are harder to gauge. This is par-

ticularly the case given the proposal's exorbitant interest rates, in an economic climate where Bank Negara Malaysia has tightened loan regulations specifically due to sustainability concerns for purchasers.

Such initiatives, as well as the current emphasis on affordable housing at the government level as well as in the media, point towards an undiminished appetite for property nationwide, though its expression has been distorted by an overwhelming emphasis by developers on products catering for the higher end of the market, with their commensurately higher profit margins. Course corrections currently consist of stepping up launches to pick up the pace, though it remains to be seen whether the flurry of activity will address the underlying issues facing the segment.

In other news, rising safety concerns sparked by the recent death of a 24-year-old administration executive when a construction hook fell on her car in Kuala Lumpur has drawn the construction industry to other sectors in search of best practices and guidelines towards halving current fatality rates in the industry by 2020. The oil and gas sector has been held up as a role model in this area, with particular

attention to Petroliaam Nasional Bhd's Refinery and Petrochemical Integrated Development in Johor as a case study.

Other leading stories this month include recent market entries from GSH Co Ltd, SP Setia Bhd, Hua Yang Bhd and Bina Puri Holdings Bhd, all of which focus on high-rise developments in and around the Kuala Lumpur city centre, along with a look at Singapore-based renovation matchmaker Qanvast, which takes the hassle out of connecting property owners to renovation and design professionals, as well as Ikea's democratic design concept for its 2017 catalogue.

More highlights in this issue of *Living & Property* include a firsthand exploration of the community that has grown up around SP Setia's Rainforest Villas enclave in Setia Eco Park, as well as a tête-à-tête with the people behind award-winning real estate agency IQI Holdings. Till next time, dear readers, do keep your ears to the ground, and don't forget to stock up for the winter.

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Sky-high city living

The launch of Setia Sky Seputeh reveals an exclusive lifestyle accompanied by amazing city views



| Text by **ANG HUI HSIEN** | hhang@hckmedia.com

If you have always wondered what it is like to live among the clouds, Setia Sky Seputeh might just be able to sate that curiosity. Though it is no Mount Olympus — where the Greek patheon is said to dwell — the SP Setia Bhd development nevertheless seems set to redefine the skyline of Kuala Lumpur when it is completed in 2020.

Targeted at upgraders and owner-occupiers from the surrounding neighbourhoods of Seputeh and Bangsar, Setia Sky Seputeh occupies 4.8 acres of freehold land opposite Mid Valley Megamall. A pedestrian bridge will be built to link the mall to the high-rise, while roads leading to the project will also be upgraded and realigned for better access.

Comprising 290 units housed in two residential towers, Setia Sky Seputeh has six layouts ranging from 2,339 sq ft to 2,998 sq ft. The spacious three, four and five-bedroom condominiums come with their own lift lobbies and are equipped with wide windows and broad balconies for optimised natural lighting. Each level houses only four to six units, to maximise privacy.

Both towers sit on a 1.5-acre resort-themed landscape podium that includes facilities like a music pod and virtual golf facilities as well as what will be Malaysia's longest man-made beach in a high-rise development. More amenities such as a heated aqua gym, gourmet kitchen and tea lounge are available on the 36th floor, a height which comes with spectacular views of the city skyline.

The first of the two blocks has already been launched, and is expected to contribute about half of the project's RM950 mil gross development value. Selling at approximately RM1,300 psf, all 145 units in Tower A will be furnished with cabinetry and electrical appliances for the kitchen as well as water heater, air-conditioning and intercom systems. ■

Composing an architectural masterpiece

The Kuala Lumpur skyline has transformed rapidly in recent years, with more changes to come as construction continues on Merdeka PNB 118, soon to be the tallest building in Malaysia and the region. Taking its place among the metropolitan landmarks of tomorrow, Bina Puri Holdings Bhd's RM338 mil Opus development, located opposite Stadium Merdeka, Stadium Negara and Merdeka PNB 118 itself, is set to propel the developer to new heights.

"The name Opus is an homage to the 12-storey Opus high-rise in Hong Kong, which is the first residential project by the American architect Frank Gehry in Asia. It's one of the most expensive developments of its kind there, priced at an equivalent of over RM6,000 psf," says Bina Puri Holdings group executive director Matthew Tee.

Situated on 1.38-acre freehold site on Jalan Talalla off Jalan Maharajalela, Opus features 357 luxury service apartment units over 32 stories. Prospective purchasers will be pleased to hear that pricing for the project takes the domestic context into consideration, starting from RM950 psf.

Bina Puri Holdings offers rhythmic lifestyles inspired by the cadence of music with its Opus service apartments in Kuala Lumpur

| Text by **ALIFF YUSRI** | aliff.yusri@hckmedia.com



Bina Puri's background and expertise as a contractor sets it apart from pure developers, says Tee



Opus commands a strategic location opposite Stadium Merdeka and the upcoming Merdeka PNB 118

Despite this, it maintains the sumptuous standards set by its spiritual counterpart in Hong Kong, with fixtures and household appliances for individual units in Tower II appointed by luxury brands Calvin Klein and Gorenje respectively. Leisure amenities on the 8th, 18th and rooftop floors also cater for cosmopolitan lifestyles, ranging from an infinity pool and meditation garden to a theatre and even wall-climbing facilities.

Units are available in studio, two and three-bedroom layouts with nine configurations to select from, ranging in built-up areas from 692 sq ft to 1,147 sq ft. The developer likens the development's balance between spaces, lifestyles and location to the rhythm of music, further reflected in Opus's façade as vertical elements draw the eye upwards with facilities decks outlined horizontally.

"What sets Bina Puri apart is our background and expertise as a contractor. Pure developers in the domestic segment can have frustrations with regard to delivery times, quality, abandoned projects and so on, but we have the experience to mitigate these concerns, as well as our own construction arm, which can come in and finish the job should anything happen," says Tee.

Opus is being developed over two phases corresponding to its two residential towers, with Tower I fully sold and Tower II currently seeing 60% uptake. Prices for Tower II have already appreciated by 20% since its launch in 2015, with completion for the development as whole projected for 2018. ■

Education in the city

An upcoming Setia Alam development driven by international academia

| Text by **ANG HUI HSIEN** | hhang@hckmedia.com

HCK Capital Group Bhd will be dipping its toes into the matured catchment area of Setia Alam in Shah Alam with the debut of the first components of its H Educity project. Plans are being made to launch the 12-acre development's initial phase, comprising five blocks of 44 shoplots, by the end of the year.

The four and five-storey units come with lifts and basement car parks and are expected to serve a 12,000-strong population. Termed V-Sentral Hub, it is the commercial component of H Educity @ Setia Alam, which has an estimated gross development value of RM1.3 bil and is located in the vicinity of Setia City Mall.

The growth of the entire project will be driven by the offshore campus of the prestigious Peninsula International School of Australia. The institution will be capable of accommodating up to 3,500 students and will be open for enrolment for Years 1 to 12, with classes for the first batch of students scheduled to start in January 2018.

The syllabus taught at the school will be similar to those



An offshore campus of the Peninsula International School of Australia will catalyse the growth of H Educity

used in Melbourne, with the inclusion of some local content to comply with the Malaysian Education Ministry's requirements. Students will graduate with the Victorian Certificate of Education, a globally recognised university entrance qualification.

This influx of international students and their families is expected to create recurring demand for the development's other components. Close to 2,000 serviced suites and apartments housed in six towers have been planned

for construction over three phases. Cornell Suites and Yale Suites will be the first in the residential component to be ready after the completion of V-Sentral Hub and the international school.

H Educity @ Setia Alam is just one in a series of mixed development projects undertaken by the HCK Group. Other areas that have been earmarked for similar developments are Cyberjaya and Semenyih in Selangor, Tebrau in Johor as well as Ipoh in Perak. ■

At home in the clouds

Taking its name from the word aesthetic, Astetica Residences is all about privacy and practicality

| Text by **ANG HUI HSIEN** | hhang@hckmedia.com



Astetica Residences comprises two towers of residential units as well as retail shoplots

Sited on 3.73 acres of land in Seri Kembangan, Selangor, Hua Yang Bhd's Astetica Residences sits next to the Besraya Highway and Kajang Dispersal Link Expressway (Silk). It is a mere 3km from the developer's flagship project One South, which is also conveniently located beside the KL-Seremban Expressway.

Estimated to have a gross development value (GDV) of RM368 mil, Astetica Residences consists of 26 retail shoplots occupying the first two floors as well as residential units. Levels two to seven are reserved for 48 studio units while 520 serviced apartments — with 10 units to a floor — rest on a facilities podium on the eighth floor.

The serviced apartments are spread across the project's two towers, which are connected by a sky bridge. Available in five layouts, Type A follows a "bungalows in the sky" aesthetic as units are not attached on any side to other units, while the rest are pairing units and are referred to as "semi-detached in the sky". These two layout concepts ensure greater privacy for residents while enhancing ventilation and natural lighting on each floor.

Prices for the two, three and four-bedroom apartments — ranging from 748 sq ft to 1,154 sq ft — have been set from RM546,040 onwards. The built-up sizes and pricing for the studio units, on the other hand, start at 558 sq ft and RM412,920 respectively. Apart from the 50-metre lap pool, sanctuary garden and other leisure options on the facilities podium, more amenities such as a yoga deck and mini rock climbing area can be found on the 26th floor.

Aimed at serving the lifestyle needs of the residents as well as the community in the immediate surrounding areas, the retail units have been designed with practical and spacious layouts to accommodate businesses like eateries, convenience stores and wellness centres. Priced from RM656,800, purchasers can choose from nine different layouts.

Completion for Tower A, with 34 stories, has been targeted for the end of 2016, while that of the second tower will be early next year. Tower A was recently launched together with the retail units, with the 35-storey Tower B expected to follow shortly after. ■

First time's the charm

Singapore-based developer GSH Co ventures into Klang Valley's residential market with the launch of Eaton Residences

| Text by ALIFF YUSRI | aliff.yusri@hckmedia.com

A fresh face in Kuala Lumpur's teeming property landscape isn't something you see every day, particularly one with the ambition and pedigree that GSH Co Ltd brings to the table. Primarily known for its hospitality commitments in Sabah, which include the award-winning Sutera Harbour Resort, this southern star is now making a splash closer to home with the introduction of its RM1.1 bil Eaton Residences luxury high-rise development.

Located in the fashionable side of the city centre at Jalan Kia Peng in Embassy Row, the 52-storey single-tower project presents an elegant statement to the Kuala Lumpur skyline and the world at large, with its distinctive silhouette and modern glass façade as trademarks of GSH Co's approach to design. Conscious of the attention its venture into the segment has drawn, the developer has spared no expense in crafting its debut residential project on local shores.

Making a grand entrance

"The launch of Eaton Residences marks another significant milestone for GSH, coming shortly after the acquisition and development of our flagship commercial building, GSH Plaza, in the heart of Singapore's central business district. Moving ahead, we will be launching two ocean-fronting residential projects in the Sutera Harbour precinct in Kota Kinabalu," says GSH Co executive chairman Datuk Sam Goi.

The leasehold high-rise development encompasses a total of 632 luxury condominium units, launching across three phases with the first phase comprising 200 units. Uptake for the initial phase has been encouraging, with 150 units booked as of September through previews and private viewings.

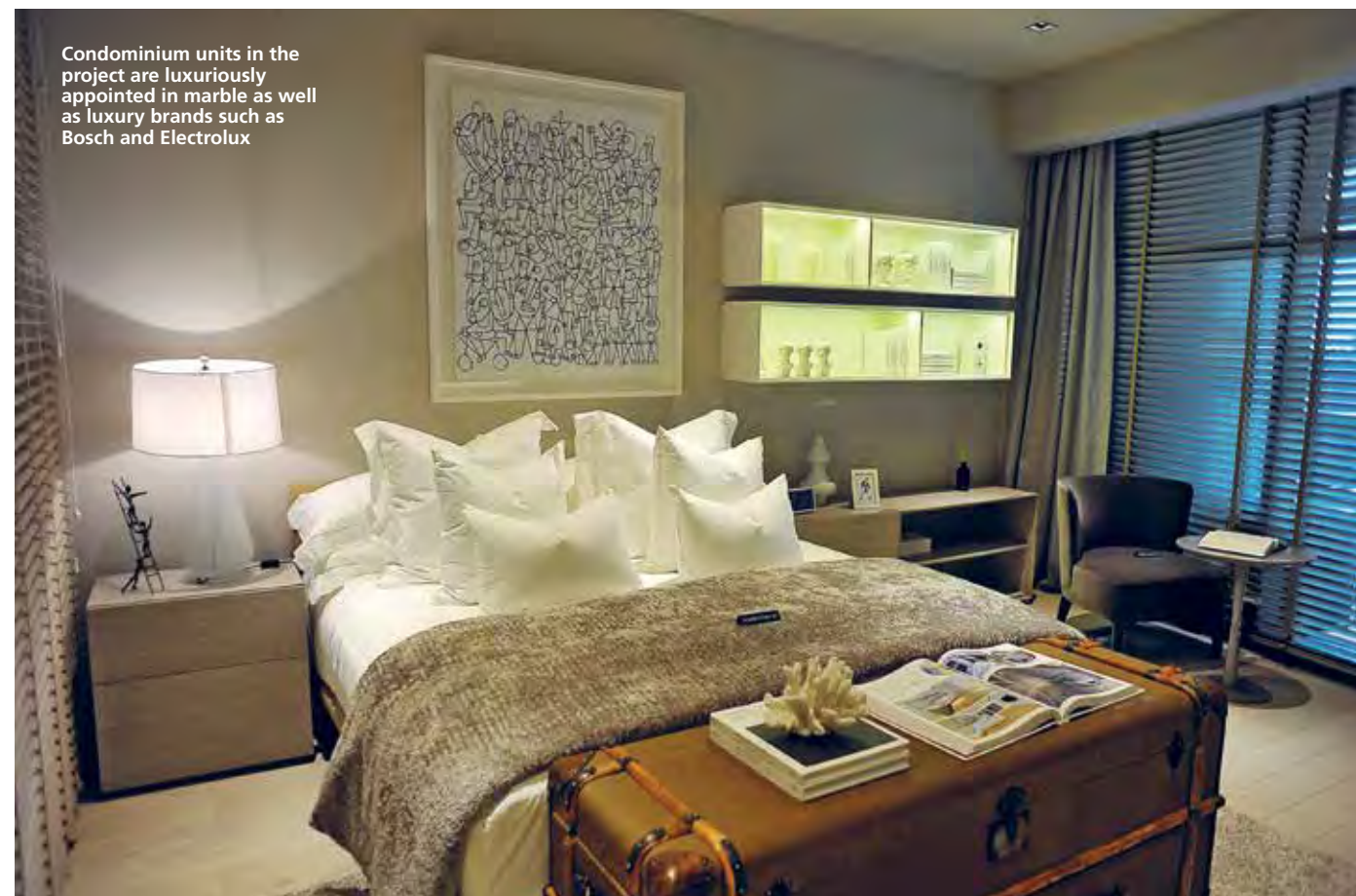
Eaton Residences offers one to four-bedroom layouts with built-ups ranging from 635 sq ft to 2,874 sq ft, as well as penthouse arrangements with built-ups from 2,271 sq ft to 2,982 sq ft, with prices starting from RM1,137,445 for a one-bedroom unit, RM1,917,091 for two bedrooms, RM2,648,250 for three bedrooms and RM4,194,537 upwards for a penthouse at launch. Units per floor range from 20 and below, with lower-density layouts for upper stories.

"The immediate goal for us with this project is to deliver a product that is well-designed, well-marketed and well-built for our investors. On a larger scale, our long-term strategy for Malaysia is to gradually build our brand, with a view towards the launch of further projects in the local context," says GSH Co chief executive officer Gilbert Ee.

Standing out from the crowd

Much of Eaton Residences' allure comes from the prestige and desirability of its address, situated in the heart of Kuala Lumpur within sight of the capital's trendiest shopping and entertainment district, Bukit Bintang. Capitalising on the location, the high-rise project's orientation offers unobstructed views of the Petronas Twin Towers as well as the nearby greenery of the Royal Selangor Golf Club.

Goi (left) and Ee (right) note Eaton Residences' distinctive blue façade as a consistent theme running through GSH Co's projects



Condominium units in the project are luxuriously appointed in marble as well as luxury brands such as Bosch and Electrolux



Prospective purchasers are invited to the project's show gallery at Naza Tower, which features exacting 1:1 representations of Eaton Residences units

It also benefits from the maturity and existing infrastructure of the surrounding metropolis, with the KLCC and Ampang Park LRT stations within walking distance, along with a network of major routes including Jalan Tun Razak, the Ampang-Kuala Lumpur Elevated Highway and the Maju Expressway. Connectivity will be further improved with the construction of MRT stations at KLCC East and Conlay as part of the Sungai Buloh-Serdang-Putrajaya Line, which is scheduled to commence operation in 2022.

The rest of the development's appeal can be attributed to the lengths GSH Co has gone through to deliver the highest standards of quality, along with its attention to detail. Eaton Residences boasts units luxuriously appointed in marble, as well as fittings by luxury brands such as Bosch and Electrolux. Property seekers can see exactly what they are investing in through the project's show gallery at Naza Tower, Platinum Park, which Ee shares was painstakingly designed to provide accurate 1:1 representations of actual units at Eaton Residences.

"If you look at the blue ultra-luxe façade on the building, it's the same type of glass which we used in GSH Plaza. There are several ideas that tie into all our designs, and a lot of the core people in our design teams are the same across various projects, whether commercial or residential. This gives them a certain characteristic aesthetic, and we want to sustain that momentum," he says.

Going the extra mile

With the project's panoramic views as a major highlight, GSH Co has taken the time to commission aerial drone shoots to meticulously capture the views of the Kuala Lumpur cityscape from specific heights at the site, corresponding to storey ranges in the project's residential tower. These visuals are available for the perusal of prospective purchasers through a media room in the Naza Tower show gallery, allowing them a preview of the vistas they can look forward to as homeowners at Eaton Residences.

"When it comes to building, the basics rarely see significant differentiation from one project to another. It is the ideas and concepts behind them that set them apart. From the point of view of the shareholders and directors of the company, what we wanted to do was something that was very visible to the buyers, so that they could be clear on what they were buying," says Ee.

The residential tower sits on a podium which welcomes visitors on the ground floor with a Grand Oasis area which includes a jogging track and day care amenities. Levels one through seven comprise car park facilities, with individual condominium units allotted up to four parking lots. The eighth storey constitutes the podium rooftop and

is given over to an Adventure Meadow area with an emphasis on green open spaces, as well as sundries such as a rock garden, fitness stations, barbecue pods and a multipurpose hall.

That is just the beginning of the recreational avenues provided by the developer, as Level 33A features a Tranquil Plateau with an open pavilion offering vantage points of the urban scenery surrounding the development, along with a sky lounge and day bed garden for a spot of rest and relaxation. Meanwhile, residents inclined towards active lifestyles will appreciate the Elevated Wellness zone on Level 50, which balances fitness and leisure with accommodations ranging from a sky gym and chill-out terrace to a lounge as well as anti-gravity yoga, game and steam rooms.

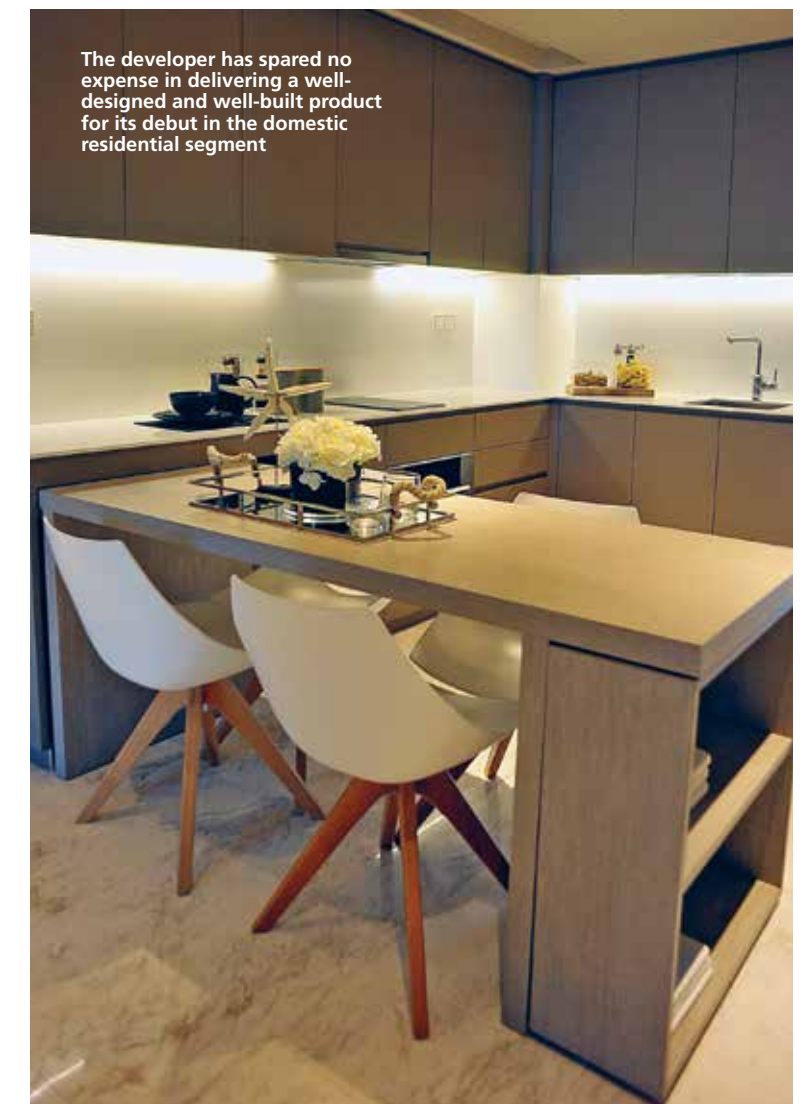
"To further enhance GSH Co's standards for its first residential development in the local segment, we have designed Kuala Lumpur's longest, widest and highest cantilevered sky pool on Level 51, where residents can enjoy night views and unwind after a hard day's work. Eaton Residences is for those who aspire to live close to the city while enjoying its cosmopolitan lifestyle, and incorporates designs to make its condominium units more spacious," says GSH Co general manager (sales and marketing) Christopher Khoo.

The bigger picture

Other conveniences include an automated waste removal system for ease of garbage disposal. Despite the diverse range of facilities built into the project, the developer has shared that maintenance fees will not exceed 60 cents psf, inclusive of sinking fund. The project as a whole is scheduled for completion in 2020.

Eaton Residences continues GSH Co's momentum following its recovery from a turbulent financial year courtesy of a restructuring exercise which saw it transition from electronics and information technology distribution to a focus on property and hospitality. The move has paid off in dividends for the group, helped by brisk sales of strata office units at its GSH Plaza development as well as improved performance of its hospitality assets in the Sutera Harbour Resort.

GSH Plaza itself is a 28-storey refurbished commercial



The developer has spared no expense in delivering a well-designed and well-built product for its debut in the domestic residential segment

A mark of distinction

In Klang Valley's increasingly crowded residential property landscape, who you are is determined by where you are

Text by ALIFF YUSRI | aliff.yusri@hckmedia.com



With the rugged hills of the Bukit Cerakah Reserve as a serene backdrop, SP Setia Bhd's Rainforest Villas — part of its celebrated Setia Eco Park development — remains one of Klang Valley's most sought-after addresses, where the developer's efforts over the years have fostered an exclusive enclave that strikes the ideal balance between status, community and privacy.

Owning a Rainforest Villas residence is a mark of distinction, whether it's a Lakeview home looking out upon ducks at play in the nearby Rymba Creek or a Hillside affair with elevated infinity pool and contemporary façade. Part of this is the peerage, with a veritable who's who of the upper crust living within its manicured estates. It's also a product of SP Setia's characteristic dedication to quality, landscaping and convenience.

In the lap of luxury

"Rainforest Villas is one of the few developments in Klang Valley that include many of the developer's most senior staff among its residents. That's the confidence we have in our product, as well as a testament to the lifestyles that we have cultivated here," says SP Setia executive vice-president Datuk Koe Peng Kang.

Limited units remain available within the project, further increasing its desirability, with each villa representing an opportunity to own a home among the elite. The villas themselves are up there with the best that the developer has to offer, featuring fully-furnished bungalows incorporating a tropical, Balinese aesthetic and built-ups from 8,485 sq ft to 10,312 sq ft.

As expected from a development of this tier, Rainforest Villas' elegantly understated interiors include highlights such as private lifts, jacuzzis, and home theatre and gymnasium facilities, as well as detached external suites for the privacy of guests or extended family arrangements. Prices for each bungalow villa range from RM7,642,800 to RM8,208,200, but as Koe shares, the emphasis is on the less tangible aspects of the community which money alone can't buy.

"After a lifetime of working hard to provide for my family, I wanted somewhere quiet we could settle down, surrounded by people with similar values. Having attained some measure of success, we chose Rainforest Villas after spending some time looking around. Here, you can wake up at six or seven in the morning and hear the birds singing outside. It's beautiful and peaceful, without the noise and other issues you find in the city, and you can get to know your neighbours or keep to yourself as you prefer," says one 56-year-old resident.

Up close and personal

Having purchased a Hillside villa in 2013, the consultant by trade spent six months renovating his new home before moving in with his wife and children. Sharing their experiences with *Living & Property* over cakes and coffee,



PHOTOS BY ANWAR FAIZ



The project's bungalow villas offer ample space for residents to customise interiors to their personal tastes

the family's candour, warmth and hospitality are visible testaments to SP Setia's success in cultivating a community within Setia Eco Park where personal relationships and mutual respect are accorded the highest priority.

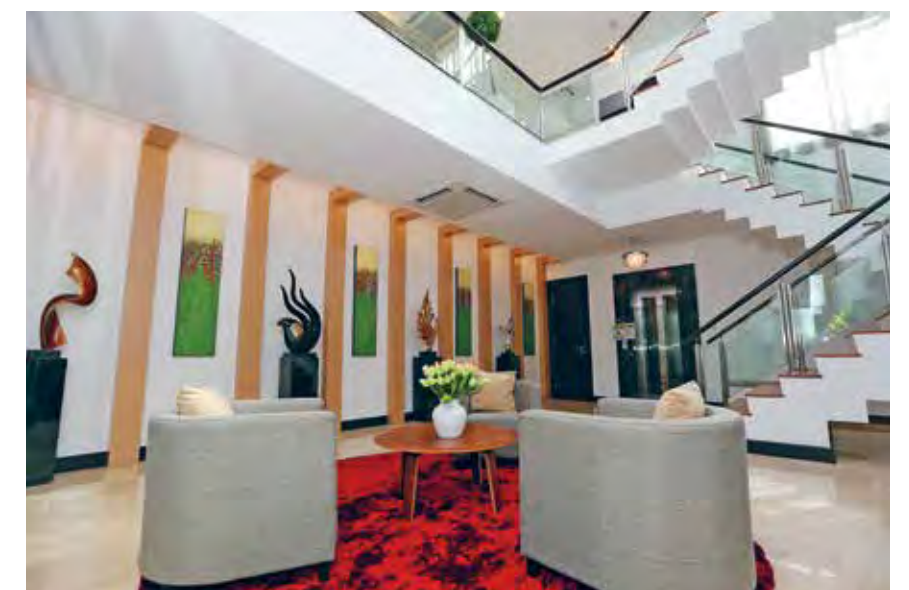
With a note of pride in her voice, the lady of the house, a former remisier, adds that she took a personal hand in finalising the home's interior design and fixtures, with the villa's ample spaces affording her abundant opportunity for personal expression. Her own embellishments include a customised hardwood console table and a rolling shutter on the third floor for added security in their personal suites, as well as a magnificent dining table hewn from a single slab of polished granite.

As with any emergent system, the growth of Rainforest Villas has brought with it some unexpected but welcome surprises, such as the formation of tuition programmes for children by residents on their own initiatives. The Canopy Club, Setia Eco Park's exclusive clubhouse, acts as a nexus for the development's social activities, with Koe sharing plans to further upgrade its facilities with 20,000 sq ft of grocery shopping space, a seafood restaurant and floating café as well as a dedicated service centre catering for the cleaning, gardening and transport needs of residents. □



Rainforest Villas includes members of the developer's senior staff among its residents, says Koe

Unit highlights include jacuzzis, private lifts, and home theatre and gymnasium facilities, as well as detached external suites for extended family arrangements



Prevalent safety concerns in the construction sector have caused industry regulatory bodies to look at best practices in other sectors

PHOTO © DANIEL CHAN

Despite its scale, the Pengerang Integrated Complex has chalked up an exemplary health and safety track record during its construction phase

Other facilities at the project include a deepwater terminal and gas pipeline

Learning from the best

Domestic construction industry looks to Petronas's Refinery and Petrochemical Integrated Development in Johor for guidance on health and safety

| Text by ALIFF YUSRI | aliff.yusri@hckmedia.com

Malaysia's construction sector has seen a spate of high-profile safety incidents in recent years, with rising concerns from numerous quarters regarding the health and well-being of workers and the public at large around work sites. This has been exacerbated by year-on-year increases in the number of such incidents, with 2015 alone seeing 88 fatalities, 138 non-permanent disabilities and 11 permanent disabilities reported by the Department of Occupational Safety and Health within the industry.

The death of 24-year-old administration executive Chin Khooon Sing after a 500kg crane hook fell on her Perodua Kelisa at Jalan Raja Chulan, Kuala Lumpur on Aug 25 has once again brought safety to the fore as a pivotal issue for the sector, one of the key drivers of the national economy and a

significant player in the national drive towards high-income status by 2020.

Looking to the leader

The operation of the crane itself outside of the safety zone designated by the site's hoard fencing, along with the disappearance of the crane operator responsible following the accident, has made it clear that the industry still has much room for improvement when it comes to the skills and professionalism of construction personnel and compliance with industry regulations.

In striving to bring these standards up to par in the domestic context, with the long-term goal of halving fatality rates from 2015's figure of 10.94 per 100,000 workers, the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) has tapped the oil and gas sector as a role model in safety and health matters, with particular attention to the best practices ob-

served by industry leaders such as Petroliaam Nasional Bhd (Petronas).

"On-site safety at our Refinery and Petrochemical Integrated Development (Rapid) in Johor is regulated by our Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) Management Plan, which all contractors must use as a guiding principle in moving forward with any and all of their activities," says Rapid project Health, Safety, Security and Environment (HSSE) head Saifuddin Shah Sowkkatali.

The effectiveness of Rapid's HSE Management Plan is backed by the exemplary health and safety track record of the RM60 bil facility, part of the larger Johor-based Pengerang Integrated Complex (PIC) and Pengerang Integrated Petroleum Complex megaprojects.

Prioritising best practices

Developed across 6,242 acres with associated

projects such as a raw water supply facility (PAMER), deep water terminal (PDPT), and regasification terminal, among others, the PIC initiative as a whole will see the involvement of an estimated 60,000 workers, with 150,000 metric tonnes of structural steel going into its construction as well as over 80 million cubic metres of earthworks.

The scale of the development, easily larger than the vast majority of projects in the construction sector, is even more notable for having progressed to 39% completion as of this year, with a current project manpower of 28,172 delivering a cumulative figure of 68,782,222 manhours since site preparation began in 2012, while recording admirably low fatal accident rates and a lost-time injury frequency rate of less than 0.5.

"The HSE Management Plan is governed by four pillars, covering compliance and governance, execution management, emergency preparedness as well as assurance and communications. We also have a set of 10 ZeTo (zero tolerance) Rules, covering issues such as valid work permits, speed limits within sites and appropriate behaviour under suspended loads," says Saifuddin.

Non-conformance with any of these rules,



Non-conformance with ZeTo Rules can lead to suspension from a given site and more, says Saifuddin

by any staff regardless of seniority, as well as third-party personnel, is subject to subsequent consequence management, ranging from a one-month suspension from the site to indefinite barring of entry for repeated violations, with investigations extended to the supervisors responsible. The company-wide initiative is a testament to the gravity with which Petronas treats health and safety concerns within its projects, with the 10 ZeTo Rules prominently displayed throughout Rapid as well as on the access roads leading to the facility.

The stick and the carrot

The ZeTo Rules, while seen as draconian by some, are certainly a step up from the circumstances which led to Chin's unfortunate demise due to the complacency of construction personnel earlier this year. Not all of Petronas's policies are as austere, however, with Rapid marking the first project in which the company has assembled on-site worker accommodations catering for diverse project staff requirements during the build period.

These accommodations consist of habita-

tion modules featuring layouts varying from 10 per room for workers to one per room for management staff, with frequent inspections to ensure that each block complies with health and safety guidelines. Aside from living arrangements, a range of conveniences and amenities are also provided, including basketball courts, cricket fields, cybercafés, mess halls and even on-site theatres with complimentary screenings of international films.

Rapid's worker accommodation zone currently houses approximately 10,000 staff, with higher capacity expected as construction progresses. It serves a number of purposes in maintaining the facility's health and safety environment, from concentrating workers in designated areas for ease of supervision and communication and enhancing worker morale and well-being to minimising the movement of personnel on and off-site to reduce security risks.

"At the moment, we have about 630 HSSE personnel, with an ideal ratio of about one HSSE staff for every 50 workers, though this can increase depending on the criticality of a given activity. Our HSE rules are stringent,

A lot of engagement needs to be done with the respective contractors and their management because on-site health and safety programmes require commitment from project directors and other senior staff.

— Saifuddin Shah Sowkkatali

and we will not compromise them for anybody, whether they are working as civil construction contractors or caterers. Everyone is treated the same," says Saifuddin.

In terms of facilities, Rapid's Central Emergency & Fire Services centre began operations in February this year, with a current strength of four watch commanders, 46 fire fighters and one rapid intervention vehicle with a 200-litre water pump, as well as one foam truck. Medical assistance is coordinated from two aid stations located next to the centre, with 25 staff delivering 24-hour paramedic services. Gleneages Kuala Lumpur has been appointed as the facility's medical provider.

A bigger picture

Other initiatives include safety-centric toolbox talks conducted by contractor or subcontractor HSE representatives, which are 10-minute affairs held daily before the commencement of work, as well as larger 20-minute gatherings reviewing achievements for the week as well as precautions for critical activities. Topical issues include housekeeping, work discipline, manual handling practices, knowledge sharing from previous incidents and more.

In addition, the HSSE department plans annual communications campaigns with

banners, posters and flyers focusing on different areas of health and safety every month. Some of the issues addressed to date include road safety, mobile equipment, confined spaces and lightning precautions, as well as healthy eating, diabetes, the Zika virus and even suicide prevention.

Despite Rapid's best-in-industry performance in terms of safety and health, Saifuddin's team is not content to rest on its laurels, maintaining the momentum of its HSE programme with active and ongoing processes. To date, these have included over 66,939 safety observations, 16,106 toolbox talks, 3,590 audits and inspections, 195,473 HSSE training manhours, 1,047 management walkabouts and 356 ZeTo censures.

"The challenges and risks posed by the construction phase of any project are high, more so than normal operations. A lot of engagement needs to be done with the respective contractors and their management because on-site health and safety programmes require commitment from project directors and other senior staff. Once that's done, they can be rolled out to the workers. Nothing can be done to highlight health and safety to workers if their managers themselves do not realise the importance of the issue," concludes Saifuddin.



LEFT: The PIC development as a whole will see 150,000 metric tonnes of structural steel going into its construction, as well as over 80 million cubic metres of earthworks

BELOW: The facility's HSSE team conducts annual communications programmes with banners, posters and flyers focusing on different areas of health and safety every month



Due props for property

Sime Darby Property takes home top honours at PropertyGuru's South-East Asia Property Awards (Malaysia)

| Text by ALIFF YUSRI | aliff.yusri@hckmedia.com

Celebrating the best and brightest in the real estate segment, the South-East Asia Property Awards (Malaysia) returned for its third successful year on local shores, with the property arm of plantation conglomerate Sime Darby Bhd sweeping numerous accolades, including the night's prized Best Developer trophy.

The ceremony, organised by PropertyGuru Malaysia and held at the InterContinental Kuala Lumpur this year as part of the regional Asia Property Awards, recognised achievements in 18 areas such as Best Luxury Condo Development and Real Estate Personality of the Year, along with the introduction of two new categories: Special Recognition in Sustainable Development and Best Boutique Developer.

Best of the best

"It is indeed an honour to receive this Best Developer accolade. We feel humbled to be included in the company of the greats who have been recognised tonight. I would like to say that this success is due to the collaboration of all our stakeholders, not just within Sime Darby Property but also with the various agencies with which we work," said Sime Darby Property chief operating officer Datuk Wan Hashimi Albakri.

The developer shared the limelight with United Malayan Land Bhd in the Special Recognition in Sustainable Development category, with the judging panel underscoring its commitment to nation-building and constant reinvention through the years.

Individual projects within the Sime Darby Property portfolio received Highly Recommended accolades as well, including Serini Melawati in Taman Melawati and



Wan (right) attributed Sime Darby Property's success to collaboration within the company as well as with external stakeholders

Clusia in the City of Elmina, which garnered praise in the Best Mid-range Condo Development and Best Housing Development (Central Malaysia) categories respectively.

Other major winners included BRDB Developments Sdn Bhd, known for its nurturing of neighbourhoods and communities in Bangsar, whose high-rise Serai project in Bukit Bandaraya, Kuala Lumpur took home multiple awards including Best Green Development and Best Luxury Condo Development (Central Malaysia).

Serai also received Best of the Best recognition in the Best Residential Development (Malaysia) category, further qualifying the developer for the South-East Asia Property Awards 2016 regional grand finals to be held in Singapore later this year.

Meanwhile, Mitraland Group Sdn Bhd received the Best Boutique Developer accolade for pocket projects such as Kiara 1888 in Mont Kiara and its integrated Cascades development in Kota Damansara. The ceremony also named Mitraland Group founder Chuah Theong Yee as Real Estate Personality of the Year, acknowledging his visionary leadership and role in shaping Mitraland as well as the industry as a whole.

On the shoulders of giants

"This is an unexpected yet tremendous honour. It is a wonderful feeling to know that the work you do is being

appreciated and considered to be of great value amongst your peers. My team and I are proud of our achievements and will continue to strive to create more incredible moments for our purchasers, investors and business partners," said Chuah.

Participants for the Malaysian leg of the South-East Asia Property Awards are evaluated by an independent panel of industry experts, with all meetings attended by a representative of the Brussels-based BDO, an international accounting, consulting and auditing specialist.

Entries are categorised into three broad groups, namely developer, development and design, with each judged according to criteria ranging from reputation, image, and use of space, construction and materials to design concept and innovation.

This year's judges comprised eight leading luminaries in the real estate and design spaces, with Jones Lang Wootton executive director Prem Kumar serving as chairman for the panel. Other members included Axis Reit Managers Bhd head of investments Siva Shanker, Chur Associates managing partner Chris Tan and Malaysian Institute for Architects president Mohd Zulhemlee An.

"Our esteemed central judging panel were very well received for their credibility and expertise. We couldn't have been prouder to have them as our jurors for Malaysia's premier real estate awards," said Asia Property Awards founder and managing director Terry Blackburn. ■



The South East Asia Property Awards (Malaysia) celebrates the best developers, projects and designs in the domestic landscape

Sororal styles in synergy

Sister act Pauline and Priscilla Ng of paul+pris show that when it comes to design, two heads can be better than one

| Text by ALIFF YUSRI | aliff.yusri@hckmedia.com

It's frequently said that great minds think alike, and nowhere is this more evident than in the sororal sensibilities of paul+pris sdn bhd, a homegrown studio founded by sisters Pauline and Priscilla Ng where design is often more than the sum of its parts.

Sharing a flair for the creative, the sisters were first introduced to the architectural arts through frequent site visits to the construction of their family's first landed house in Klang while they were still children. Encouraging their interest in the field, their father advised them to pursue their passion in studying interior design.

Born to design

"We both graduated from the UK. Both of us worked for other companies in Kuala Lumpur before setting up paul+pris in 2008; in addition, Pauline worked overseas in Dublin, Australia and England before settling back in Malaysia. We both felt there was a gap in the industry here, and we wanted to do more by creating our own interpretations for interior spaces and design," says Priscilla.

As their first start-up, Pauline and Priscilla faced a steep learning curve, particularly in the studio's first three years. One of their initial challenges was bridging the gap between client expectations and their own creative drive, which they overcame through constant communication and a fundamental belief in the value of design.

Though the sisters handled every aspect



Priscilla works closely with the design team and constantly sources for new materials, methods and technology

of the studio's operations when starting out, they soon brought dynamic young designers into the team to supplement their own talents and grow the business. Their own roles developed along the way, with the added responsibility gradually drawing out their complementary managerial styles.

"Pauline has great strength in handling paul+pris's incomings and outgoings, which include contracts and finance, while also handling a few key projects. In a way, she keeps the studio grounded. On the other side, I work closely with the design team, keep the team motivated and happy, and am constantly sourcing for new materials



Pauline handles paul+pris's contracts and finances, keeping the studio grounded

for our library, methods and technology," says Priscilla.

Striving in unison

Since its establishment, paul+pris has crafted interiors across the residential and commercial segments, including contemporary designs for Melbourne Business School's Kuala Lumpur headquarters, Jump Street KL in Petaling Jaya, and Digi Telecommunications Sdn Bhd's head office in the Subang Hi-tech Industrial Park, widely renowned for its unorthodox, open concept.

What sets paul+pris apart is its emphasis on the collaborative nature of the creative

process, with a focus on the possibilities of transformation through design. Here, the paul+pris team explores the changing ways in which users interact with, communicate through and behave within environments, with boundaries, volumes and spaces as their medium.

"The studio wouldn't be what it is without the team of people we work with, particularly our designers. We feel that strong connections between talented souls create one-of-a-kind solutions which add value for our clients. I wouldn't call it a philosophy or style as such; we like the idea that it's a merging of great minds that becomes our language and design approach," says Priscilla.

"We also design products or bespoke pieces as an extension of what we do for our clients, if we feel such pieces should be included as an element of an interior or space. Due to our exposure in the UK, Pauline and I are very much moved and influenced by British schools of design; however, we feel that Malaysia has its own brilliance as well, and we've met talented individuals here who produce amazing work."

Looking to the future, Priscilla anticipates the transition of design from its traditional role as technology continues to evolve, with growing collaborations between studios and industry driven by an increasingly interconnected global market. Until then, she and Pauline will continue their own journey within the field, while perfecting paul+pris's eclectic, client-centric approach. ■



An emphasis on collaboration in design is the focus at paul+pris

Industry Updates

Electronics giant Panasonic Corp has launched its latest line of system solutions, dubbed PROs (Professional Solutions), incorporating eight new products ranging from IP (internet protocol) intercom systems and video management software to communication servers, projectors and high-speed scanners.

Themed *End to End Integrated Solutions to Business*, the range is targeted at the education, hospitality, retail and broadcast industries, as well as the residential segment, with the manufacturer's video intercom systems already seeing applications in high-rise and gated developments across the central region.

Cross-segment convergence

"As technology advances towards a convergence to a single platform, Panasonic has continued to introduce products with the aim to improve productivity while reducing total cost of ownership. We have a wide range of products, and by integrating them, we can offer our customers a one-stop solution for their daily business operations," says Panasonic Malaysia Sdn Bhd deputy managing director Hiroyuki Muto.

Highlights in Panasonic's PROs line-up of video intercom products include the VL-SWD501 wireless and VL-SF70 wired systems, both offering developers and purchasers added security through identification of visitors without prior entry to the property. The VL-SWD501 does away with wiring for convenience of installation, features a five-inch screen with zoom functionality and includes SD (secure digital) card writing capabilities to store recordings for subsequent review.

Meanwhile, the VL-SF70 offers a larger seven-inch screen, as well as modular support for up to three monitor units, suitable for larger home layouts. Like other products in the PROs range, its video intercom systems represent the continuing synthesis of Panasonic technologies, with selected models supporting smartphone and WiFi connectivity as well as email notifications.

"On the condominium side, we've had quite a few installations in the Klang Valley area, as well as a few in states such as Johor and Penang. These installations are generally under the Panasonic Business banner, with PanaHome Malaysia offering related construction and smart home systems," says



PHOTOS BY ANWAR FAIZ

Seamless solutions for the future

Panasonic's Professional Solutions offer integrated technologies for home, hospitality, offices and more

| Text by ALIFF YUSRI | aliff.yusri@hckmedia.com

Panasonic Malaysia country head (system solutions) Seelan Kandasamy.

Worth a thousand words

Complementing the Panasonic PROs video communications range is Video Insight, a scalable enterprise video management suite which supports more than 3,000 camera models from more than 100 manufacturers. Perfect for large-scale facilities such as com-

mercial buildings, offices, universities, hospitals, law enforcement and more, the software solution allows for convenient remote site monitoring from a centralised location.

Video Insight isn't limited to passive observation of video footage, however, as it includes an innovative range of analytical functions ranging from license plate and facial recognition to preventive detection — with the latter allowing the software to automatically identify loiterers, left items and more, further enhancing security efforts.

"The market is currently less active, and we believe that we can achieve our 130% sales growth target by focusing on specific industries, providing solutions customised to each segment. So if we talk to a developer, for example, we won't approach them with a single product, but from the perspective of an integrated solution," says Muto.

"If you look at individual product categories, Panasonic is already doing well. For instance, in the communications arena, we have a 52% market share. In professional audio-visual products, particularly projectors, we have about 40% of the market in the above-4,500 lumen category. Many of our existing clients are business-related, so we're looking to increase our footprint in the residential segment," adds Seelan.

Other Panasonic innovations featured in the PROs range include Light ID, an information distribution system that sends detailed descriptions of digital signage displays to mobile devices via light transmission. The technology has potential applications in the retail and tourism industries, allowing shoppers or travelers to receive directions in multiple languages from a single display, for example. ■



(L-R): Panasonic Malaysia deputy country head Yasuhiro Oda, Muto and Seelan

“As technology advances towards a convergence to a single platform, Panasonic has continued to introduce products with the aim to improve productivity while reducing total cost of ownership.”

— Hiroyuki Muto

Quality within affordability

The Selangor State Development Corporation pushes its affordable housing agenda forward with the townships of Antara Gapi and Kota Puteri

| Text by ANG HUI HSIEN | hhang@hckmedia.com



The *Rumah Selangorku* Idaman project in Antara Gapi consists of 129 units of one-and-a-half storey terrace homes

It is every person's dream to own his or her own home, but it remains just a dream for many who are unable to cope with soaring house prices while facing end financing issues. Recognising the dire state of the situation, the Malaysian government has progressively introduced a line of schemes aimed at helping this group, particularly first-time homeowners, purchase a property.

An example is *Rumah Selangorku*, which was introduced by the Selangor Housing and Real Property Board (LHPS). In order to protect the interests of genuine purchasers and prevent speculators from abusing the scheme, only first-time house buyers with a maximum household income of RM10,000 per month are eligible to apply.

Additionally, applicants must be residents of Selangor and purchase the house for their own occupancy. The built-ups for the different types offered under the scheme — classified into A, B, C and D — range between 700 and 1,000 sq ft, with their selling price capped at RM250,000.

In line with the state government's *Rumah Selangorku*

agenda, the Selangor State Development Corporation (PKNS) has also rolled out a series of affordable housing projects under *Program Pemilikan Rumah Idaman Negeri Selangor* (Idaman). Under this initiative, factors like household income, social needs and demographics are taken into account during the development stage in order to produce well-planned townships that are equipped with basic infrastructure.

Surrounded by nature

The third affordable housing project that follows the Idaman concept, *Rumah Selangorku* Idaman PKNS Antara Gapi sits within the borders of the 952-acre Antara Gapi, a new township in Serendah. It consists of 129 units of one-and-a-half storey terrace homes with a minimum built-up size of 995 sq ft.

Targeted for completion in December, the project sprawls across 5.32 acres of land. The houses' contemporary designs, spacious interiors and practical three-bedroom layouts, com-

bined with affordable price tags that start at RM180,000, promise ample value for money for purchasers.

Antara Gapi is a new township development by PKNS comprising commercial and residential components surrounded by tropical scenery. It is located within Serendah, a well-known weekend destination for city dwellers equipped with basic amenities like schools, banks and retail outlets. The lush natural surroundings provide plenty of recreational opportunities, with centres such as the Eagle Nest Outbound Adventure Eco Resort, Serendah Golf Resort and Templer Park Rainforest Retreat being found in the vicinity.

Public transportation is also available, with the Serendah KTM (Keretapi Tanah Melayu) station — one of the stops on the KTM West Coast line — situated approximately 10km away from Antara Gapi. The township is also accessible via major highways which include the Guthrie Corridor Expressway (GCE), New Klang Valley Expressway (NKVE) and North-South Expressway (NSE).

Homes about town

Also targeting completion in Dec 2016 is *Rumah Selangorku* Idaman PKNS Kota Puteri, which is tucked away in Section 5 of Kota Puteri, a new township in the former coal mining town of Batu Arang. Located approximately an hour away from Antara Gapi, the 8.48-acre project comprises 198 townhouses that come with three bedrooms, except for two disabled-friendly units that have two bedrooms.

Built-up sizes for the lower-level units range are 940 sq ft and 943 sq ft, with the units priced at RM180,000 each. On the other hand, the upper-floor units feature larger built-up sizes — 1,014 sq ft and 1,040 sq ft — and are going at RM220,000 per unit.

Developed by PKNS, the Kota Puteri enclave is made up of 12 sections and is also known as Bandar Baru Batu Arang. It comes under the administration of the Selayang Municipal Council and is accessible via the GCE, NKVE and Kuala Lumpur-Kuala Selangor Expressway (Latar).

In addition, the township is about 21km away from the Bestari Jaya campus of Universiti Selangor (Unisel), the first state-owned university in the country, making it ideal for families with children seeking to further their studies. ■



The 198 townhouses in Kota Puteri include two disabled-friendly units

Heaven on Earth

Sime Darby Property rebrands its Kuala Lumpur Golf & Country Club Resort as Alya Kuala Lumpur

| Text by ALIFF YUSRI | aliff.yusri@hckmedia.com

The 360-acre Alya Kuala Lumpur development includes TPC KL as well as residential, commercial, retail and hospitality components

Situated in one of Klang Valley's trendiest addresses, Alya Kuala Lumpur is the refreshed brand identity of the Kuala Lumpur Golf & Country Club (KLGCC) Resort, Sime Darby Property Bhd's upscale lifestyle development surrounding KLGCC, which itself has been renamed TPC Kuala Lumpur following the acquisition of licensing rights from the Tournament Players Club Network.

The resort — which is named for an Arabic word referencing the sky, heaven and divinity — spans a total of 360 acres with a gross development value (GDV) of over RM8 bil, comprising eight parcels over 61 acres excluding TPC KL. It incorporates residential, commercial, retail and hospitality components developed with the vision of merging contemporary lifestyles and facilities with the surrounding natural scenery.

Pristine landscapes, prestigious homes

"With this launch, we seek to create a new global model of Malaysian luxury lifestyle brands that can be replicat-

ed worldwide. Alya KL integrates modern luxury living, space planning and best-in-class facilities into the topography of a verdant, tropical setting — giving its communities the time, space and experiences beneficial to their well-being," says Sime Darby Property managing director Datuk Jauhari Hamidi.

Both Alya KL and TPC KL are next to the 245-acre Bukit Kiara public park, with numerous affluent enclaves, including Mont Kiara, Sri Hartamas and Bukit Damansara. They are surrounded by a confluence of major routes, namely the Damansara-Puchong Expressway (LDP) as well as the Sprint Expressway and its Penchala and Kerinchi Link offshoots.

The development's maiden project, the RM800 mil Senada Residences, is tentatively scheduled for launch this month, encompassing two residential towers with 429 units of serviced apartments as well as four retail podium blocks and an office complex. It is situated next to the Sime Darby Convention Centre, which is proposed to be rebranded as the Alya Convention Centre.

"Alya KL encapsulates the last piece of prime property in Kuala Lumpur and it is an address that many people are waiting for. As one of Malaysia's top property developers, we remain committed not only to maintaining our leadership position in the industry but also to remain as a trusted developer of the highest standards in quality," says Jauhari.

Building towards the future

Completion of all parcels under Alya KL is projected for 2025. Existing developments carried over from KLGCC Resort include East Residence, a 10-acre residential project featuring 112 courtyard villas, 14 townhouses and the East Residence Clubhouse. The project will retain its name subsequent to the rebranding.

The resort enclave underscores Sime Darby Property's commitment towards the cultivation of Greater Kuala Lumpur as one of the top 20 most liveable metropolises in the world by 2020, as well as an economic driver under the Economic Transformation Programme.

Part of its overall rebranding initiative, KLGCC Resort's renaming as TPC KL was officiated by Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Hajah Haminah, as well as PGA Tour deputy commissioner Jay Monahan. It is the first golf facility in South-East Asia to join the TPC Network.

"We are delighted to have our newest licensed TPC located at the heart of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. TPC KL is an excellent facility with world-class amenities and has distinguished itself as an outstanding host site for the CIMB Classic. We are also excited that TPC KL can potentially serve as a catalyst for more TPCs to emerge in Asia with the rapidly growing number of Asian golfers," says Monahan.

As part of the move, TPC KL's areas of operations, club and human capital management, and food and beverages services as well as its leisure offerings will be elevated in keeping with its positioning as a paradise for golf and leisure in the region.

Established on former plantation land in 1992, the club received a major renovation in 2007, with more than 3,000 trees planted since its launch. It is now home to more than 50 bird species as well as ground-dwelling fauna, such as squirrels, jungle fowl and monitor lizards. ■

The rebranding aims to create a global model of Malaysian luxury lifestyle brands which can be replicated worldwide, says Jauhari



Real estate success

Bringing together individuals with diverse backgrounds can be a challenge, but one real estate firm has proven that as long as mutual respect is present, success is possible

| Text by ANG HUI HSIEN | hhang@hckmedia.com

Sitting in a room with the top management of International Quality Investments (IQI) Holdings Sdn Bhd, surrounded by physical testaments to their achievements, it is evident that each representative of the agency believes in what they do. Although much of the discussion is led by group chief executive officer Kashif Ansari and group managing director Daniel Ho, the others chime in frequently, revealing their passion for real estate in doing so.

IQI Holdings is, in actual fact, the Malaysian office of the global advisory firm headquartered in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. “It serves as the base of the group’s South-East Asia operations and is the connection for investors coming in from Europe and the Middle East to Malaysia,” Kashif explains.

In fact, the IQI group was born from the founders’ personal experiences and ventures into property investment. They were prompted to start their own firm in 2006 to resolve the mismatch between investors’ expectations and the status quo at the time, after finding out that instead of proper training, agents there were frequently just given pamphlets to prepare them for the role.

Ho recalls, “We thought, let’s start something and add more value to the market. Since the investors are asking for more and the agents are not delivering up to their expectations, why don’t we try giving what the investors are looking for? This was the reason we set up the group”.

Secret to success

Aside from its investment arm, IQI Holdings also has a retail arm which recently won Agency of the Year (Titanium) and Outstanding Real Estate Agency of the Year (Titanium) accolades at the prestigious iProperty.com



The retail arm of IQI Holdings has won accolades despite being relatively new to the market

erty.com Agents Advertising Awards 2016 — an impressive feat considering that the agency was set up only four years ago.

Ho attributes this success to three main criteria: being able to listen well to what clients are looking out for, understanding their needs, and fulfilling those needs. “A lot of mismatches were in the area of representation. At IQI Holdings, we minimise these misrepresentations and maximise delivery by giving the appropriate information in a

concise and clear manner,” he says.

In order to do so, the firm conducts weekly training for their agents where they learn about best practices from across the globe. These sharing sessions are not limited to industry and technical knowledge, but also include soft skills that are useful in handling clients, aligning with IQI Holdings’ core culture of sharing knowledge.

Kashif points out that approaches like these are reminiscent of why they started

the group — to bridge the gap that existed between investors and agents. In this instance, the gap existed because training and support for the agents was simply not available in the market. Aside from ensuring that IQI Holdings representatives are well-equipped with the necessary skills to sell their products, measures are also taken to keep the team motivated and improve their quality of life.

Bringing the world to Malaysia

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the group is its success despite the diverse backgrounds of its partners, with its founders representing nations as diverse as Malaysia, Singapore, the UK and US. Describing the partnership as “a collective coming together of different partners from international areas”, Ho says that the success of IQI Holdings boils down to the understanding that exists among them and the common interests they share for the company.

Kashif believes that their international exposure has allowed them to learn from the best in the world and bring these practices to Malaysia, which is attractive due to its straightforward real estate legislation, language and established infrastructure as well as its affordability compared to other countries in the region.

Commenting on their long-term vision for IQI Holdings, Ho alludes to further expansion, with plans of growing the firm to the rest of Asia. Kashif drives this point home, saying, “On the global front, our growth is quite good and we have done quite well in Malaysia. Our target is to be the top real estate agency in the Asean region, and I would say that we are on track to achieving that”. □

(Clockwise from back left) IQI Holdings chief operating officer Nabeel Mungaye, executive director Sheila Tan, chief financial officer Shahid Saleem, Ho and Kashif



PHOTOS BY JONATHAN LOI



Renovation matchmaker

Qanvast aims to reduce hassles for homeowners by matching them to trusted design and renovation professionals to turn their dream homes into reality

| Text by **ANG HUI HSIEN** | hhang@hckmedia.com

First comes the house, and then comes the renovation. Just like a blank canvas, an empty house presents exciting opportunities for owners to colour and design their spaces to reflect their personalities, transforming them from bricks and mortar into their personal sanctuaries.

In fact, many Malaysian homeowners do not consider their house to be in move-in condition until some form of renovation, no matter how minor, is done. Empty houses, however, are not the only ones that stand to benefit from renovation works as redesigning can give a breath of fresh air to an existing home and even make it seem brand new.

A play on the word canvas, Qanvast is a web and mobile application that connects homeowners with home professionals comprising interior designers and renovation contractors. According to Qanvast Pte Ltd country manager (Malaysia) Lee Zhern Yuen, their aim is to help homeowners express themselves with their properties as the medium.

Removing renovation woes

In between knocking down walls and erecting new ones, the process of designing and renovating a home can be an arduous one. Aside from having to keep to a budget — most enthusiastic owners have had to scale down their grand renovation ideas after finding out that they simply cannot afford the cost — there are also widespread horror stories of having to deal with problematic contractors.

Such cases happen more often than they should, with almost everyone having experienced or heard of a renovation gone wrong — a fact which Lee acknowledges by saying that there is too little trust in the industry and too many cautionary tales.

He relates one such example that hit particularly close to home: “A relative wanted to renovate her property and wound up with three different companies. The home is still not completed, even after three years, and the budget has escalated beyond her initial estimation”.

This happens because there are no verified points of reference for owners to go to, most of whom rely on the recommendations of family and friends instead. “There are thousands of interior design firms in Malaysia and it is difficult to know which ones are good. So, as homeowners, we would ask our friends and family to recommend interior designers. But this also means that the designers will basically reproduce their previous designs which, of course, does little to reflect individual tastes,” Lee points out.

This is where Qanvast comes in, offering a platform to match homeowners to credible contractors. Users are able to view the portfolios of different firms and filter them by budget and style. They can also submit their renovation details and receive quotes for free from five interior designers

who come closest to matching their requirements. Participating firms have to undergo a pre-qualification process before joining the platform. To ensure that they maintain their standards of service and quality, Qanvast periodically conducts internal reviews on the firms, who are also evaluated by testimonials from their customers.



Lee says there is too little trust and too many horror stories in the industry

Participating firms have to undergo a pre-qualification process before joining the platform. To ensure that they maintain their standards of service and quality, Qanvast periodically conducts internal reviews on the firms, who are also evaluated by testimonials from their customers.

Looking to the future

Looking to the future

Qanvast was launched in Singapore in early 2014, and only recently entered the Malaysian market. To date, the application has more than 300 interior designers on board and is garnering thousands of downloads per month.

Having achieved so much in such a relatively short span of time, what is next for Qanvast? Lee says, “For Malaysia, we are focused on growing our interior design business to have the widest collection of projects”. When asked if an expansion is on the horizon, he confirms that they have set their sights on several major cities around the region.

As for their success, Lee credits it to trust, inspiration and experience, where the application not only provides connections to reputable service providers but also offers convenience that contributes to an overall pleasant and polished experience. ■



What's in store at Ikea

The Swedish manufacturer's democratic design concept revolves around form, function, quality, low pricing and sustainability

| Text by ANG HUI HSIEN | hhang@hckmedia.com



Ikea is adding a new frame and six covers to mark the 40th anniversary of the Poäng armchair

What drives household Swedish brand Ikea to continue designing and producing smart furnishing options for abodes around the world? A passion for home furnishing and the desire to create better everyday lives for its customers, both of which are fuelled by a curiosity about the way people live.

"Ikea is a curious company. We try and develop new ideas all the time. The world is changing fast and it is difficult to keep up, but curiosity is what drives us," says Ikea South East Asia project manager (Life at Home & Range) Leonie Hoskin.

She points out that although different people approach them in different ways, the activities that they routinely undergo at home are broadly the same, and it is these commonalities that have helped the designers at Ikea come up with democratic design.

Exploring life at home

The concept is based on the results of a global survey conducted annually by Ikea to identify and explore the needs of people at home. This year, instead of asking what and how people do things at home, the survey polled participants in 12 countries on what makes a home.

"Most (53%) people say that their things reflect who they are — not very surprising as homes are made up of people and their personality and what they like — while 22% feel that things in their home are strictly functional," Hoskin reveals.

Additionally, 43% of participants voiced their desire to be able to grow and store food. Hoskin explains that the ability to grow one's own food contributes to a sustainable lifestyle, which is an initiative Ikea supports.

These findings led to the democratic design concept, which focuses on five principles — form, function, quality, low price and sustainability — and serves as an inspiration for home furnishing ideas that are laid out in Ikea's new catalogue for 2017. The concept itself, however, is not new, as Hoskin explains that it has been a part of Ikea from the very start.

"Every Ikea product contains elements of democratic design and is evaluated for its effect on people's lives, society and the environment. These can also be found in the food we serve, how we pack and transport our products and even in our business model," she says.

Elements of democratic design

Elaborating further on the five principles that make up democratic design, Hoskin says: "Form is about making the



PHOTOS BY MUHAMMAD HAZIM

ABOVE: Elements of democratic design are present in every product that Ikea manufactures

LEFT: Hoskin reveals that curiosity is what drives Ikea to constantly develop new ideas



world beautiful, and that nice feeling of being at home surrounded by the things you like. Function, on the other hand, is about making everyday life easier and more meaningful".

She adds that quality is about making things last longer, revealing that Ikea faces a challenge in using the right materials and choosing the way it manufactures its products so that they live up to their customers' demands. Low price is also a major consideration as Ikea aims to make things affordable for everyone.

"Sustainability is about taking responsibility to help and minimise long-term consequences on the people and the planet as we consume more than our planet can give us. At Ikea, we know that we must consume less, observing the limits of our planet. We need to make products that are made with waste materials or use fewer materials," Hoskin stresses.

In conjunction with its new 2017 catalogue that focuses on these five principles, Ikea has introduced new products in both of its stores in Malaysia. The new Ikea Sladda bicycle is designed to complement urban lifestyles, while also being low-maintenance and supporting sustainable, healthy living in the city. The Poäng armchair, an existing product within its range, will also be receiving a boost for its 40th anniversary with the addition of a new frame and six covers to its existing configurations. ■



The new Ikea Sladda bicycle is designed to complement urban lifestyles



Star Central consists of eight-storey office towers that offer SMEs naming rights opportunities

Keys in hand

PURCHASERS of Phases 1A and 1B of Star Central in Cyberjaya received their keys from Joyful Star Sdn Bhd in a ceremony held recently, with 80% uptake of both phases thus far and 30% sales reported for the newly launched Phase 1C. Representing the developer — a subsidiary of Emkay Group Bhd — during the handover was Emkay Group executive director Ahmad Khalif Mustapha Kamal.

Featuring 17 semi-detached towers and two stand-alone bungalow units, the office development is hailed as the first of its kind targeting small and medium-size enterprises. With a gross development value of RM451 mil, the eight-storey office towers offer naming right opportunities as well as attractive rental yields. ■

Running for charity

MATRIX Concepts Holdings Bhd recently organised Malaysia’s largest inflatable challenge at Bandar Sri Sendayan, attracting 1,600 participants eager to overcome the seven inflatable obstacles constituting its race course. Dubbed the Matrix Titan Challenge, proceeds from the event went towards three charitable organisations selected by the Matrix Concepts Foundation.

These organisations included the Malaysia Lysosomal Diseases Association and Shelter Home for (Abused) Women & Children as well as the Kiwanis Down Syndrome Foundation. Aside from the obstacle course, the event also offered trampoline, wall climbing, games booths and face painting activities for children. ■



Proceeds from the Matrix Titan Challenge went towards three charitable organisations



Avista saw 75% uptake of its double-storey terrace units during launch

New vistas for Sepang

IOI Properties Group Bhd has launched Avista, the newest residential development in its township of Warisan Puteri in Sepang. The project comprises 182 freehold double-storey terrace homes with 4+1 bedroom layouts and built-ups from 2,277 sq ft. Prices at launch ranged from RM663,344 upwards, with 75% uptake seen during the event. Avista is projected for completion by December this year. ■

Generosity in success

MAH Sing Group Bhd group managing director Tan Sri Leong Hoy Kum has been honoured with the International Entrepreneur Excellence Award 2016. The award, which recognises the achievements of international entrepreneurs, leaders, corporate social responsibility ambassadors and outstanding sportsmanship, was presented at a dinner held in conjunction with the Malaysia-China Silk Road Economic Forum 2016.

Meanwhile, the group’s charitable trust Mah Sing Foundation recently donated RM200,000 to Kuen Cheng High School and Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina Pin Hwa 2 for their redevelopment plans. It also contributed RM30,000 to the International Real Estate Federation Malaysia Charity Golf Tournament 2016, which serves as a platform to aid non-governmental organisation Strategic Methods and Ongoing Advancement in its efforts to improve the livelihood of orang asli children through education. ■



(L-R): Kuen Cheng High School board member Chow Sow Fond and principal Gooi Swee Gaik receiving a mock cheque from Mah Sing Foundation chairman Datuk Syed Norulzaman Syed Kamarulzaman

Building education

BANDAR Seri Coalfields, an integrated township development in Sungai Buloh, will soon include a Wesley Methodist School (WMS) campus among its amenities. As the wholly owned subsidiary of Kuala Lumpur Kepong Bhd (KLK), KLK Land Sdn Bhd recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with WMS formalising the agreement, with the first phase involving the setting up of a kindergarten and primary school.

A secondary school with an international syllabus has been proposed for the second phase. KLK CEO Tan Sri Lee Oi Hian says that WMS was selected because of its track record in providing quality education and producing top scorers. The 1,000-acre Bandar Seri Coalfields consists of commercial and residential components, with more than 1,500 units built and handed over within the development to date. ■



Bandar Seri Coalfields will soon include new school facilities



The developer’s AddWash innovation allows for the progressive insertion of additional items to a laundry load

Better ways to clean

SAMSUNG Electronics Co Ltd has supplemented its popular AddWash WW8500 washing machine with a washer-dryer combo, comprising the WD6500K and WD5500K variants, as well as a slim line-up featuring the WW6500K, WW5500K, and WW4500K models.

The manufacturer’s AddWash feature allows users to progressively add items of laundry to a load. Other innovations in the range include Samsung’s digital inverter, which offers reduced operating noise, energy efficiency and guaranteed long-term performance, along with a smart check feature to diagnose problems through a smartphone app. ■



(L-R): Chang with EcoWorld divisional general manager Ho Kwee Hong and executive director and chief financial officer Datuk Heah Kok Boon