

think green

Serina Hijjas on 'hijau'

By Abby Lu

Rome wasn't built in one day, and neither was the Green Building Index (GBI). In its formation, numerous parties and personnel have come together to develop and refine the rating system.

In the first of a series featuring quick takes with the board members of the GBI Accreditation Panel (GBIAP), *NST Property* speaks to Serina Hijjas, director of Hijjas Kasturi Associates Sdn Bhd, an accomplished architectural practice founded in 1977.

Serina, a Bartlett School of Architecture and University of Sydney alumna, has received three Asean Energy Efficiency Awards in her 20-year stint as an architect. She also sits on Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia's Sustainability Council.

Describing green buildings as not sufficient to combat climate change, here are excerpts of her conversation:

Your reasons for involvement?

We have a keen familiarity with energy efficient buildings, having worked on a few such as the Putrajaya International Convention Centre, Securities Commission HQ and Telekom Malaysia Headquarters Building.

Should the government give a bigger push for green buildings?

To begin with, incentives would be good. This will make property owners feel there's a benefit in building green, which at present costs eight per cent to 10 per cent more for commercial structures.

Another positive step is to set an example by greening government buildings. The Public Works Department, for instance, is working with the Danish



The government should set the precedent by greening their buildings, says Serina.

government to examine ways to use 10 per cent to 15 per cent less energy by optimising maintenance.

What are the main roadblocks to the green movement?

There still isn't enough awareness and in this aspect education is very important. We're looking at education programmes at different levels, starting from teens, to meet them at public schools, and such.

I'd also like to note that the biggest carbon dioxide emissions come from industrial activities and the automotive industry. This makes transportation, which also affects community and population movements, a key factor and the government should look into this.

How will green certifications affect the price of real estate?

At the moment, many among the middle-class are aware and there may be higher take-up of green buildings within this bracket.