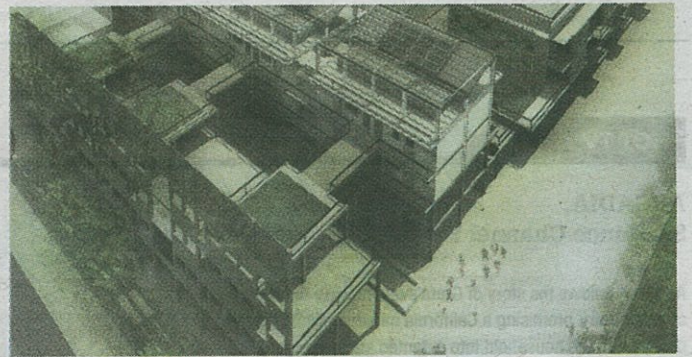


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Resorting to green measures

Now hotels and resorts can flaunt their green creds, thanks to GBI's newly unveiled rating tool

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IF there is any sign that the demand for green buildings is on the rise, it the fact that leading green rating agency Green Building Index Malaysia Sdn Bhd (GBI) has expanded its scope of rating tools to now include sustainable tourism management in Malaysia.

GBI officially launched its latest green rating tool at the Sime Darby Convention Centre in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, unveiling new guidelines that help project teams and hotel executives better understand the types of strategies, investments and benefits associated with "greening" their properties.

The new mechanism will cover four forms of certification: Non-Residential New Construction (NRNC) Hotel Tool, Non-Residential Existing Building (NREB) Hotel Tool, Non Residential New Construction (NRNC) Resort Tool and Non-Residential Existing Building (NREB) Resort Tool.

The hotel tools are designed for urbanised city tourism developments, whereas the resort tools focus on homestay and beachside tourism developments.

GBI and the Malaysian Association of Hotels recognise that hotels, resorts and other hospitality venues have huge greening opportunities, as these infrastructures can contribute substantially to the carbon footprint.

Those within the hospitality industry are starting to see the importance of sustainable features in their buildings, which can reflect positively on their corporate branding, corporate culture and overall competitiveness in what is becoming an increasingly green-centric global economy.

According to Pertubuhan Arkitek Malaysia (PAM), the founders of GBI, the impact of hotels and resorts to the environment can be mitigated via measures found in the new GBI Hotel and Resort Tool. This includes factors such



IMPROVING OUTLOOK: Hotels and holiday resorts are recognising the positive impact green credentials can have on their business

as energy and water efficiency; waste reduction and sustainable procurement; healthy, comfortable and productive indoor environment by improving indoor air quality; access to daylight; and thermal comfort.

PAM president Chan Seong Aun said many assume that electricity is generated via clean and environmentally friendly methods. The truth is that most of the electrical energy provided to developments is generated via coal burning, which results in huge amounts of CO₂ emission that increase the national carbon footprint.

"Buildings developed in tropical climates such as Malaysia, focus on reducing the amount

of heat accumulated within the structure," Chan said.

"About 16% of energy used in buildings comes from the usage of air-conditioning. The application of GBI certification will encourage buildings to be built in a manner that maximises natural ventilation, allowing an increase in natural air flow and reducing the usage of air-conditioners. This then reduces electricity consumption and the carbon footprint."

Prior to the Green Building Index (GBI) Hotel and Resort Tools launch, hotel industry developments across Malaysia had been utilising the Non-Residential New Building (NRNB) certification by GBI, which was not entirely specific to their needs.

So far, 10 hotels have been NRNB certified, but with the launch of the new tool, the registered number of hotels and resorts certified with GBI are forecasted to triple, said GBI Accreditation panel member Von Kok Leong.

Currently, 500 have applied for GBI rating and only 210 have met the criteria for the certification.

Another recent development that shows that green initiatives are on the rise is Petaling Jaya City Council's (MBPJ) recent announcement that it will require new developments to fulfill a list of green criteria before it issues approvals.

The move is part of MBPJ's plan to make the city a sustain-

able one by 2030.

Developments such as semi-detached and bungalows would have to be fitted with a rainwater harvesting systems, while new commercial and mixed-commercial developments will have to fulfill criteria that are GBI compliant. This includes the installation of rainwater harvesting systems, use of light emitting diode (LED) lamps and sizeable landscaped areas, among others.

When asked about the connection between MBPJ and GBI Malaysia, Von said that upon reviewing GBI, MBPJ found the certification to be the most comprehensive and relevant, thus selecting the GBI criteria to be included in its guidelines.