



From left: Persatuan Pengurusan Kompleks Malaysia vice-president 2 Vincent Chong, Sarly Adre, Von and Chung

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A need for greener buildings

BY **CARMEL DOMINIC**

Malaysia had more than 40 retail mall projects that were in compliance with the Green Building Index (GBI) as at May. At present, 15 are green-certified.

"We're now looking at the possibility of another 20 million sq ft of green retail spaces coming up within the next few years, which is a commendable milestone for Malaysia in terms of green, sustainability footprint," GBI Accreditation Panel chairman Von Kok Leong says.

GBI is a green rating tool developed by the Malaysian Institute of Architects and Association of Consulting Engineers Malaysia. It was introduced to the market in 2009.

Von was one of the speakers at the inaugural Persatuan Pengurusan Kompleks Malaysia-Nippon Paint Green Mall Seminar 2015, which was held in April.

Catering for mall owners and industry professionals, the seminar was aimed at helping them learn and share invaluable insights into the benefits of investing in a green building and how it will contribute to the environment and create a sustainable community.

Before the seminar began, eight non-residential new construction projects were awarded GBI certification. Among them were One City (Phase 2) developed by One City Properties Sdn Bhd, Boulevard Shoplex @ centreSTAGE owned by Cherish Springs Sdn Bhd and Jaya One The Next Phase by Tetap Tiara Sdn Bhd.

The Selangor and Terengganu governments have gazetted that developers will be made to comply with the revision of the Uniform Building By-Laws 1984 Clause 38(a), which states the standards of MS 1525, whereby the overall thermal transfer value of a building should not exceed 50 watts per sq m from Dec 27, 2012. Several other states are motioning for the same law to be gazetted in their area too.

As at mid-May, a total of 130 of 251 registered residential buildings were GBI-certified.

Raising awareness

Much has been said about going green and its benefits for the environment

and the community. In the past decade, there have been many public service announcements and advertisements encouraging Malaysians to take part in the different efforts that were and are still being carried out to create a green-conscious community.

Yet, how aware are the general public and how far have they come in their efforts to create a greener and more sustainable Malaysia? Are they fully aware of the consequences of their non-actions?

While Von notes that awareness has grown in recent years, he believes the most effective way to educate and raise the level of awareness further is to cultivate green-conscious habits from young.

"Rather than just transmitting the information, we believe that if we impart a value [or a habit or practice], it will become second nature, especially to the young. As they grow, the value will grow and mature with them. Just like how we teach our young to give up their seats for the elderly or a pregnant mother on a bus, the concept applies to green-conscious habits as well," he tells *City & Country*.

Malaysia Green Building Confederation (MGBC) president Sarly Adre Sarkum adds, "A lot of times, campaigns that are run serve only to disseminate information. It's not about true or impactful knowledge pertaining to going green and sustainability. People don't take it to heart, don't understand its impact or how it relates to them. They know it as mere data. But knowing something, practising it and feeling that it has something to do with you is a completely different thing.

"Unfortunately, a lot of the time, these green campaigns are about information. This is why education and awareness is such a huge part of the essence of MGBC. Our green campaigns usually involve students and stakeholders, so that there is participation and interaction as opposed to just handing out leaflets and asking them to read."

The concern that these two men share is simple — young architects who are eager to compete and gain recognition in society would afford little or no time to researching the need for green build-

ings once they step out into the working world.

"I would know this as I went through the same thing. But we believe that if its importance is taught in school and if it is included as part of the syllabus in the architecture faculty of colleges and universities, these future architects will know it like the back of their hands instead of wasting time looking and referring to a book," says Von.

Another reason Von and Sarly Adre strongly advocate teaching green-conscious habits to the young is because participation in the GBI is voluntary.

"We have chosen to keep the tools for GBI voluntary because we have found, through studies that were done on our behalf, that when developers choose on their own accord to use the tools that GBI has to offer, the results are more genuine as opposed to those who were mandated to use it. The effort is tangible and everyone will benefit in the end. Therefore, for future developers and architects to want to use this tool voluntarily, they must know how it works and its benefits," explains Von.

Both gentlemen stress that all efforts to make a green building must be localised. Architects and developers may learn from their counterparts overseas but because each environment differs, the initiative to score points for GBI must go hand in hand with the local environment.

Michael Chung, general manager for group sales and business development of Nippon Paint (M) Sdn Bhd, says it is critical for "industry players to put in our concerted effort to work towards greener, sustainable malls or buildings that reduce carbon footprints".

"By bringing together industry professionals, developers, architects, interior designers and mall owners, we can effectively share insights and knowledge of scalable total green solutions that are practical and beneficial for shopping malls, thus improving both their interior and exterior environment," he says.

When constructing a green building, focus is placed on increasing the efficiency of resources such as energy, water and environmentally friendly construction materials, while reducing the building's

impact on human health and the environment during its lifecycle through better siting, design, construction, operation, maintenance and removal.

Green buildings should be designed and operated to reduce the overall impact of the built environment on their surroundings based on six tools: energy efficiency (EE), indoor environment quality (EQ), sustainable site planning and management (SM), materials and resources (MR), water efficiency (WE) and innovation (IN). Developers and architects need to comply with these tools because this is how their green efforts will be measured.

EE means that energy consumption in a building is improved by optimising its orientation, minimising solar heat that is gained through the building envelope, harvesting natural lighting, adopting the best practices in building services including the use of renewable energy, and ensuring proper testing, commissioning and regular maintenance.

EQ is when the building is able to achieve good indoor air quality performance, acoustics, visual and thermal comfort. These involve the use of low volatile organic compound materials, the application of quality air filtration, proper control of air temperature, movement and humidity.

SM is selecting the appropriate sites with planned access to public transport, community services, open spaces and landscaping. It involves avoiding and conserving environmentally sensitive areas through the redevelopment of existing sites and brownfields as well as the implementation of proper construction management, storm water management and reducing the strain on existing infrastructure capacity.

MR is the use of environmentally friendly materials sourced from sustainable sources and recycling, and the implementation of proper construction waste management with storage, collection and reuse of recyclables and construction formwork and waste.

WE refers to rainwater harvesting, water recycling and water-saving fittings, and IN is the innovative designs and initiatives that meet the objectives of the GBI. **E**