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# SUSTAINABLE AGENDA

Healthcare operators urged to go green.



1

**A**s the saying goes: Health is Wealth and awareness about the importance of good health is gaining traction.

The healthcare sector is growing more robust with more operators entering the fray with more healthcare facilities and hospitals sprouting up to meet the healthcare needs of the people.

There is a need for the healthcare fraternity to look for ways to "green" their operations by ensuring more resource-efficient hospitals and facilities are being built, and that their processes will not contaminate the environment.

According to findings by Green Building Index Accreditation Panel (GBIAP), hospitals and healthcare facilities have been found to be among the most energy-intensive structures that leave a high carbon footprint on the environment.

The healthcare sector is said to be a big contributor to carbon dioxide emission and various waste materials from its operations, and there is an urgent need for hospital operators to look at ways to be more resource-efficient. The healthcare operators need to commit to build new green hospitals.

GBIAP chairman Chan Seong Aun said while a lot of focus is on greening residential homes, commercial buildings, malls and hotels, many are unaware that the healthcare industry is also negatively impacting the environment's sustainability.

"While the trillion-dollar healthcare sector is working hard to save people from diseases attributed to environmental factors, it is unintentionally contributing to the world's carbon footprint.

"Greening the healthcare sector should be made a critical priority, be it through safer chemical disposal,

water conservation, waste reduction or developing more resource-efficient buildings and processes," Chan stressed.

He explained that a green and resource-efficient hospital will promote public health by continuously lowering its impact to the environment and will ultimately eliminate its contribution to the burden of disease. It also recognises the connection between human health and the environment, and demonstrates that understanding through its operations, governance and strategy.

World Health Organisation attributed a quarter of all human diseases and deaths to environmental-related factors including indoor and outdoor air pollution, unsafe drinking water, poor sanitation, and climate change amongst others.



2

## GLOBAL INITIATIVE

GBIAP co-chairman Chen Thiam Leong concurred, pointing out that without a doubt, the sustainability agenda has reached various industry pillars, and the spot light is now on the healthcare sector.

"All industry stakeholders are urged to develop a deeper understanding of the first green hospital accreditation tool, developed by Green Building Index Sdn Bhd together with the Ministry of Health. The establishment of the rating tool for hospitals will provide a specific and measurable yardstick in ensuring that the healthcare operations will be efficient and environment-friendly," Chen said.

Green Building Index (GBI) is Malaysia's green rating tool for buildings and townships to promote sustainability in the built-environment. It is developed specifically to suit the Malaysian tropical climate, its environmental and developmental context, cultural and social needs.

The GBI Hospital Tool was launched last year covering six key criteria – Energy Efficiency, Indoor Environmental Quality, Sustainable Site Planning and Management, Materials and Resources, Water Efficiency and Innovation. Hospital buildings that are currently in operation and also the new ones can be accredited under the tool.

As of March this year, 11 hospital projects had been certified under the GBI Hospital Tool.

Chen said even though many operators may have the funds and the knowledge about greening their projects, whether it is a residential building, factory, mall, hotel or hospital, the main issue is the low priority given to the initiative.

"With the extension of incentives provided for green technology initiatives up to 2020 and the amplified educational efforts, I am confident there will be more urgency on the need to protect the environment. The cost savings to be derived will encourage the adoption of green practices among the healthcare fraternity," he added.

On the prevalence of green practices by the healthcare sector, Chen said there are at least a few hundred green hospitals around the world, the first being the Boulder Community Foothills Hospital in Colorado, USA in 2003.

Malaysia's first green hospital is the Amanjaya Specialist Centre in Kedah which achieved a Green Building Index silver certification in 2015.

The other Malaysian-registered green hospitals are Columbia Hospital Petaling Jaya, Gleneagles Hospital, KPJ Selangor Specialist Hospital, KPJ Seremban Specialist Hospital.

"Hospitals are increasingly playing leadership roles in leveraging on their positions to advocate for policies and practices that promote both human and environmental health," Nippon Paint Malaysia group general manager Gladys Goh said.

"We need to look beyond the short term. Industry operators, business owners and all stakeholders need to claim ownership in safekeeping and nurturing the land in which we operate in," she added.

**"A green and resource-efficient hospital will promote public health by continuously lowering its impact to the environment.**

- Chan Seong Aun

1 Columbia Hospital Petaling Jaya

2 Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur.



Green Building Index Accreditation Panel (GBIAP) chairman Chan Seong Aun



Green Building Index Accreditation Panel (GBIAP) co-chairman Chen Thiam Leong



Nippon Paint Malaysia Group General Manager Gladys Goh