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Rehda Youth's tour focuses on green buildings

By Ewe Shufei / TheEdgeProperty.com | April 12, 2016 10:05 AM MYT

THE youth wing of the Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association, better known as Rehda Youth, organised its seventh Green Tour on March 9.

The first Green Tour was held in Kuala Lumpur in 2012. Subsequent tours took place overseas, such as in Bangkok, Sydney, Singapore and Tokyo.

In keeping with the organisation's objective of spreading awareness among the younger generation of developers, the tour allows Rehda Youth to visit sustainable, eco-friendly buildings and learn about their practices to lessen their environmental impact.

This year, the first building visited was Menara Binjai. The green-certified, Grade-A office block sits on a 1.1-acre parcel at the intersection of Jalan Binjai, Jalan Ampang and Jalan Tun Razak. Formerly known as Menara CSS, the tower was built in 2008 on the site of the family home of the late Dr Chua Seong Siew.

Khor Joo Saik Sdn Bhd (KJS) teamed up with Veritas Design Group, Ranhill Bersekutu Sdn Bhd, Crest Builder Sdn Bhd and Web Structures Pte Ltd to design and actualise the development.

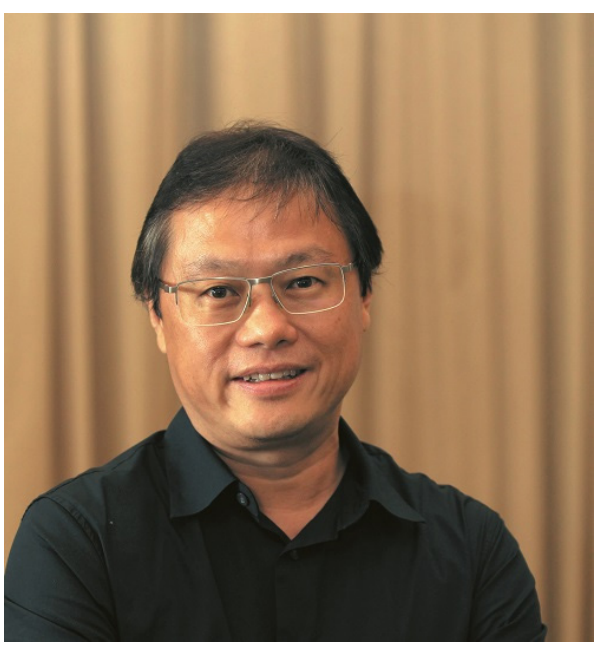
"The project was realised by the late Khor Joo Saik, after whom Dr Chua named his company," Veritas Design Group principal and director Lilian Tay said in her speech, during the Green Tour presentation.

Menara Binjai's gross floor area is about 473,000 sq ft while its net lettable area is 330,000 sq ft. It has a gross floor plate size of 16,000 sq ft.

Boasting two green certifications — Singapore's BCA Green Mark Gold and Malaysia's Green Building Index (GBI) — Menara Binjai is said to use around 30% less power compared with the average building.

"Singapore's BCA Green Mark Gold was launched in 2005 while Malaysia's GBI was launched in 2009. Ambitiously, the building targeted to achieve both these certifications," KJS project manager David Hong said during the presentation.

The 36-storey building's green features include sky gardens, and curtain walls fitted with double-glazed low-e glass with low reflective coating for better insulation. It also has energy-saving chillers, water-efficient sanitaryware and fittings, photo sensors for parameter lighting and a zonal control air-conditioning system.



Menara Binjai's most unique feature is its destination-based lift system with regenerative power. The same system, which is designed by Veritas Design Group, is used in 1 Sentral in Kuala Lumpur Sentral. Tenants are issued with cards that are programmed to bring them to their floors to ensure efficient use of energy and shorter waiting time, in addition to increasing security at the building.

"[Menara Binjai] also has MSC status for tenants to enjoy tax benefits," said Hong. "We're running at roughly RM480,000 per month in terms of operation cost, and we already save about 30% in terms of electricity."

Since its completion in 2012, the building has seen an occupancy rate of 99% with tenants such as the British High Commission, Fuji Xerox, Samsung, Hyundai, Idemitsu Kosan and shipbuilding company DCNS.

Next on the tour was S P Setia Bhd's new Grade-A corporate headquarters in Setia City, Setia Alam's commercial centre in Shah Alam, Selangor. Completed in 2014 with a gross development cost of about RM104.28 million, the building has a gross floor area of 33,798 sq m and houses about 500 employees.

Sited on a three-acre parcel, the headquarters was the first privately-owned office and third building in Malaysia to be certified GBI Platinum. It also has a GreenRE Platinum rating.

"After Malaysia's GBI was launched, we decided we wanted to improve our standards and quality," said Dr Tan Loke Mun, the architect of S P Setia's headquarters. However, the payback period for green investments are not attractive despite savings of around RM14,440 from rainwater harvesting and RM31,300 on electricity per year, he added.

The building has energy-efficient features such as double-glazed windows, energy-harvesting solar photovoltaic panels, flexible lighting controls and auto sensor-controlled lighting. It also has a rainwater-harvesting system for landscape irrigation.

"We were inspired by the mangrove trees and their adaptability in rainforests," Tan said when talking about the building's façade, which has columns sitting on a reservoir that collects rainwater.

To lessen its carbon footprint and environmental impact, the building used GBI-certified architectural products and construction materials together with sustainable construction through system formwork, storage and construction waste management. Recycling bins and GBI-certified water-saving sanitaryware are provided on the premises.

There are also preferred parking spots for car-pool and green vehicles, parking bays for bicycles and an elevated pedestrian pathway that connects to the surrounding buildings and amenities.

In keeping with the theme of being in harmony with nature, the courtyard on Level 8 boasts a water wall that reuses air-conditioning condensate water and harvested rainwater.

Indoor environmental quality is maintained through efficient air-conditioning system designs — the architects had implemented a raised floor system so that building services such as air conditioning, power and data-cabling are beneath the floors to allow fast and inexpensive reconfiguration of office spaces and lower energy costs.

A common thread through most of the Green Tour presentations was a need for more green buildings.

"We think the government should subsidise green initiatives. With government support, the recovery period would be significantly reduced," said Hong.

Tan echoed, "We want to stress the importance of protecting our ecosystem by creating a conducive one within the workplace." He said the need for green buildings and sustainable developments will only increase in the future.