

Property Development Association Agrees to Go Greener

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The Diamond Building in Putrajaya is an award-winning example of sustainability. The building serves as the headquarters of the Energy Commission. Photo Credit: Energy Commission

When it comes to sustainable building practices, Malaysia hasn't exactly been a world-leader. Less than 2% of buildings in the country has been rated with a sustainability tool, and many local construction businesses have yet to adopt more environmentally friendly practices of the kind that are already common in neighboring Singapore. That might be about to change, though.

In a promising development, the Construction Industry Development Board of Malaysia and the country's Real Estate And Housing Developers' Association (EHDA) have agreed to collaborate on a variety of projects so as to promote sustainable and low-carbon practices across the country. The government is also encouraging property developers to adopt its Malaysian Carbon Reduction and Environmental Sustainability Tool (MyCREST) in a bid to reduce their carbon footprints as part of a government-led initiative aimed at "growing the economy in a resilient, low-carbon, resource-efficient and socially inclusive manner."

"By encouraging the adoption of MyCREST, developers will consider green practices at all stages of their developments and mandate sustainable practices from a top-down approach," said Deputy Minister of Works Rosnah Shirlin. "Ultimately, this will help to reduce the level of carbon emissions generated by the construction industry in Malaysia." Members of EHDA have agreed to submit 20 of their ongoing and upcoming projects to assessment with MyCREST as part of a pilot program, whose projects include SP Setia Berhad's Corporate Headquarters in Setia Alam, IJM Land's Waterside Residence in Penang, and Damansara Uptown One's Uptown 1 project in Petaling Jaya.

The government has pledged to do what it preaches and adopt MyCREST in all its public projects valued above RM50 million. These projects currently include the Energy Commission's Diamond Building in Putrajaya, Majlis Amanah Rakyat's Kolej Kemahiran Tinggi MARA in Perak, the Malaysian Construction Academy in Sabah, and CIDB Malaysia's newly constructed complexes in Johor and Sabah.

The concept of green buildings has been catching on in Malaysia over the past few years with more and more developers constructing new properties in line with the certification criteria of the country's Green Building Index. For a building to receive the GBI's seal of approval, it needs to be water and energy efficient and boast high-quality indoor environments with modern green technology tools. It also needs to have been built sustainably from eco-friendly materials with a limited use of natural resources at a suitably green site. Malaysia has a long way to go before it can call itself a truly green nation when it comes to its construction sector, but the country has taken a welcome step forward.