

# Bringing the sustainability agenda to the forefront

*The govt under the ETP has set a goal to make the capital of Malaysia among the top 20 most liveable cities by 2020. Can this be achieved in less than 3 years?*

by RAHIMI YUNUS

**PICTURE** this. After a good night's sleep, you wake up and prepare breakfast in your energy-efficient kitchen. A hot shower from an eco-friendly bathroom. After taking a train for 30 minutes, you enter a green-certified building.

Your day has been pleasant. Easy street crossing. No heavy traffic. Fresh morning air.

Sounds utopian, but people living in Melbourne, Australia, can relate to this.

The coastal city Down Under was crowned as the world's most liveable city for seven times in a row in the Global Liveability Ranking released by the Economist Intelligence Unit last year.

However, Kuala Lumpur — or simply known as KL — was ranked at No 70 out of the 140 cities surveyed. Neighbour Singapore was at No 35 and the top spot among South-East Asia cities.

The government under the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) has set a goal to make the capital of Malaysia among the top 20 most liveable cities by 2020. Can this be achieved in less than three years?

KL is fast becoming a key economic epicentre for the region, drawing millions of people, locals and foreigners alike. Some 1.8 million people are already calling themselves "KLites". By 2020, the population is projected to rise to 2.2 million people. Greater KL, which covers a 2,793 sq km area beyond the KL city to other major conurbations in the Klang Valley, is now home to 7.25 million people.

The World Bank has projected 90% of Malaysians to be living in cities by 2050, compared to 74.5% as of 2016. One answer to the green city lies in an efficient urban mobility solution.

The Klang Valley Mass Rapid Transit (KVMRT) is a step in the right direction. The

first line from Sungai Buloh to Kajang has been operational since July last year, while construction for MRT Line 2 (MRT2) is ongoing. In the meantime, the MRT3 is at the planning stage.

Beyond a connected public transport network, city planners must prioritise bicycle networks and auto-free streets. This could be one of the areas that KL needs to catch up on fast.

In 2015, the KL City Hall (DBKL) built a 5.5km bicycle lane stretching from Dataran Merdeka to Mid Valley, Bangsar. But the unsegregated blue lane on the edge of the streets and some parts shared with the pedestrian footpath, are largely deemed as not safe.

Not quite serving its purpose, the bicycle lane does not appeal to riders and is mostly left unused. DBKL announced last October that it will build the first dedicated bicycle lane, ahead of hosting the World Urban Forum in February.

According to reports, the 3km route from Menara DBKL 1 on Jalan Raja Laut right up to Menara DBKL 3 on Jalan Raja Abdullah, Bandar Wawasan, is currently underway.

It is a baby step compared to Chinese city Chengdu, which has started construction of the world's longest urban cycle lane network spanning 17,000km in September last year. The work is part of the city's plan to tackle traffic congestion and pollution as China has been listed as one of the deadliest countries for outdoor air pollution by the World Health Organisation.

Amsterdam in Europe has about 40% of its commutes done on bicycles. But making KL a bicycle-friendly city is not the only matter to look at.

## Creating Cleaner Air

Works must be done to improve the current pavements that are narrow, high kerb and often

worsen by potholes, parked motorcycles and street hawkers.

Sidewalks are almost non-existent in some parts of the capital. The authorities, however, have done an amicable job in improving the current available sidewalks.

Some 48km of pedestrian paths have been renovated under the National Key Result Areas with new pedestrian bridges and covered walkways. Several upgrading works are currently active, including in the busy street of Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman.

An improved public transportation with bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly urban designs can reduce the reliance on private cars — which will eventually create cleaner air.

Malaysia's Green Building Index (GBI) was designed specifically for the tropical climate (hot and humid) and the country's current social, infrastructure and economic development. Singapore has its Green Mark rating tool, while the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design is the most widely used green building rating system in the world.

A green building aims at increasing the efficiency of resource use — energy, water and materials — while reducing the building's impact on human health and the environment. The idea of building a green building is now becoming mainstream among the developers in Malaysia.

"Acceptance level has been encouraging. About 50% of commercial and residential areas combined in KL are green-rated, either through GBI tools or other rating systems," GBI Sdn Bhd GM Dr Herman Teo told *The Malaysian Reserve*.

Teo said the concept of sustainable townships has been widely popular and developers are making efforts towards that direction with

rising consumer demands.

Planning is key for any green development and the cost factor has largely dampened the green building agenda.

"It boils down to good town planning and design. However, cost would be a major obstacle for the developers due to the perception that making green buildings would be more expensive. It's always about profitability before sustainability. A lot of our concepts are based on the design, which does not necessarily cost more to build.

"It is not that difficult to get certified. They have to know what to look for in order to gain a green certification," Teo begged to differ.

New developments are normally planned with sustainability in mind, such as the Tun Razak Exchange (TRX), Bandar Malaysia and KL Metropolis. Yet, old and existing buildings can also attain GBI certification — as proved by some of the retrofitted projects in KL including the Petronas Twin Towers, Menara Maybank, Menara SME Bank and Cap Square Tower.

The implementation of GBI falls under the larger umbrella framework called the "Low Carbon Cities Framework and Assessment System" introduced in September 2011. The framework measures the performance of cities and townships — especially their contribution to carbon dioxide emission level in the country — and pushes Malaysia in a headlong dash towards a green nation by 2020.

Masdar City in the United Arab Emirates could be a good model to follow as it was billed as the world's first zero-carbon city in 2016.

KL has all the correct elements put in place to make it a green and sustainable city rivalling other major cities around the globe. It is now the time for execution and making it a reality.

## ADVERTORIAL

# An ultra luxurious architectural masterpiece



Le Nouvel KLCC sits across from the iconic Petronas Twin Towers

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA'S PULSATING CENTRE OF SOCIOECONOMIC ACTIVITY, boasts an increasingly integrated transport network, affordable living and a highly-skilled, English-speaking community that makes it conducive for multinational companies in the fields of finance, education, electronics and petroleum to set up a hub in Kuala Lumpur. Social and political stability, up-to-date infrastructure and a closely regulated property market have also positioned Malaysia as an ideal location in Southeast Asia for investors and consumers alike.

Today, a number of new developments around the immediate vicinity of the Petronas Twin Towers have emerged, but few stand out quite as prominently as the dual-tower residence of Le Nouvel KLCC by Wing Tai Asia. Its bold façade is accented by abundant, well-kept tropical vines creeping down the towers. Situated within this highly sought-after address and sitting on premium real estate.

Le Nouvel KLCC faces the Petronas Twin Towers and Suria KLCC, and is well-situated amid high-end shopping centres, top hotels and corporate offices. There is a RapidKL LRT station at doorstep and the upcoming Singapore-Kuala Lumpur high-speed rail station is just a short drive away, making it a convenient address for a second home within the region.

Apart from its prestigious and convenient location, Le Nouvel KLCC is an architectural masterpiece, and was conceived by principal architect Jean Nouvel, whose stellar works showcase his keen perception for the intricacies of light, shadow, transparency and opacity. The Pritzker Architecture Prize laureate has won almost every major accolade in architecture. In 2013, he won a competition to design the National Art Museum of China in

Beijing. Other inventive works include the Louvre Museum in Abu Dhabi and the Tour de Verre in New York.

For this project, Nouvel collaborates with internationally renowned design luminaries such as lighting designer Hervé Descottes, landscape artist Patrick Blanc and the award winning interior designer Koichiro Ikebuchi.

Throughout the Le Nouvel KLCC property, those signature design

elements are apparent. Once past the 24-hour security gate, a wall fountain greets residents and guests, twinkling from sunlight reflecting off the water.

Walls and pillars around the property are of glazed stucco — a material requiring skillful application — and changes in appearance throughout the day due to light and shadow play.

The details aren't limited to construction alone, for unique design

elements are also integrated into the building's elements. Around 200 species of native tropical species of climbing plants grows on 8 sides of the façade of Le Nouvel KLCC, collected by Dr. Patrick Blanc, a notable French botanist specialising in tropical plants, credited for popularising the vertical garden concept.

Le Nouvel KLCC offers 195 luxurious

apartments that are spread across two towers spanning 43 and 49 stories respectively, seamlessly connected by a pool deck on level 7 and a Sky Bridge on level 34. Here, you will be privy to an exquisite panorama of the city from the Sky Gallery, housed inside the linked bridge on level 34.

It also houses the Sky Lounge, Sky Kitchen and Sky Dining where you can indulge in delectable cuisine as well as cushy cigar and wine lounges.

Tower One features 78 units comprising two, three and four-bedroom suites, two Simplex units and two penthouses. Tower Two offers 117 units of two to three-bedroom suites and two penthouses. Selected units in Tower Two are now available for preview, of which some of these are fully furnished and in move-in condition.

The plush and refined interiors feature beautifully appointed furnishings and artful, elegant detailing such as bespoke silk screened window panels, with unique designs in each residence. White marble flooring, Poggenpohl designed kitchens, Miele household appliances and Lema wardrobes enhance the luxurious settings.

Premium facilities abound. Swimming pools, a state-of-the-art gym, and an expansive yoga room beckon, as do family-friendly facilities such as spacious game, theatre and karaoke rooms.

Le Nouvel KLCC is an exclusive, low-density world that affords an intimate sanctuary. For a private viewing to Le Nouvel KLCC, be sure to call ahead for an appointment.

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