

**GBI-certified:** The Leafz at Sungai Besi, Kuala Lumpur. The awareness of green certification of buildings is growing and many developers are keen to do it.



The Enclave, Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur. Owners of GBI-certified buildings receive two incentives from the government – tax exemption and stamp duty exemption.



# Building right

An increasing number of construction projects are obtaining green certification.

**T**HE local building and construction industry is slowly but surely embracing sustainable construction. Some 70 buildings covering over 26 million sq ft (2.42 million sq m) have been certified under the Green Building Index (GBI) since the launch of the national rating scheme in May 2009.

According to GBI accreditation panel chairman Boon Chee Wee, these include 39 new non-residential and 25 new residential buildings, as well as five existing buildings that have been green-retrofitted. Four of these buildings are certified Platinum, and 20 as Gold, the two highest classifications under the GBI.

Applications for certification have come from a variety of new and existing buildings, including government and corporate offices, hotels, serviced apartments, showrooms, art galleries, malls, factories, warehouses, condominiums, landed residential properties, and even individual homes.

The GBI rates all applications according to six criteria: energy efficiency, indoor environmental quality, sustainable site planning and management, materials and resources, water efficiency, and innovation. The criteria were established by the GBI accreditation panel to guide building design, construction and operation in Malaysia to focus on increasing the efficiency of resource use, while reducing the overall impact of the built environment on its surroundings during the building's life-cycle.

Owners of GBI-certified buildings receive two incentives from the government – tax exemption and stamp duty exemption.

Boon expressed gratification that the GBI has been well-received and is widely recognised by the government and the public, and assured that the rating tool will continue to guide the greening of the country's building and construction industry.

Meanwhile, Holcim Malaysia chief executive officer, Mahanama Ralapanawa, urges the government to ensure that large-scale developments adopt green building standards or certification.

He says awareness of green certification of



Rhombus, Kuala Lumpur.

buildings is growing and many developers are keen to do it but need a clear framework and direction.

"We hope the government will enforce green certification as a requirement for all new development while making this viable and bankable with carefully structured incentives and provisions, to be fair," he says in a press statement.

He cites the example of the Singapore Government, which has set a target whereby 80% of all buildings must be GreenMark-certified by 2030.

He says the certification system will ensure more new and responsible construction materials and practices are adopted industry-wide, such as those which emphasise efficient use of energy and materials.

Holcim recently obtained a Sirim eco-label for its range of green cement that is made from part-recycled material using stringent environmental technologies, thus reducing the overall carbon footprint.

"Using OPC (ordinary Portland cement) is a crime, given we now have safer, cleaner, more efficient technology present in green cement," says Ralapanawa.