



Future-proof property

The property industry is at a crossroads with developers looking towards the future and bringing in innovations that will negate the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. See what designs are in demand.

> See pages 8-9

INSIDE
THIS
ISSUE



SPECIAL FEATURE

Prioritising underlying
demand drivers for growth
> 2 & 16



SPECIAL FEATURE

Overhang property precipitate
developers' hangover
> 3



SPECIAL FEATURE

Virus takes
a toll
> 14-15

Prioritising underlying demand drivers for growth

Budget designed to combat a multitude of challenges

Contributed by **SULAIMAN SAHEH**

BUDGET 2021 is described as an expansionary budget designed to combat the multitude of challenges amidst a tumultuous economic environment and uncertain political landscape against the backdrop of the on-going battle against Covid-19.

The RM323bil budget, the largest the country has seen, has its goals anchored on enhancing the people's wellbeing especially those affected by Covid-19, ensuring the nation's business continuity and strengthening economic resilience.

With such budget size that effectively pushes the budget deficit to 5.4% as a percentage of GDP, the economy is expected to grow next year in the range of 6.5% to 7.5%.

While the budget allocation was huge, provisions that directly boost the property sector were rather targeted. This is understandably so as the focus was to strengthen the roots of the economy rather than treating the superficial symptoms for a more sustainable and solid growth of the market at large by focusing on expenditures with high multiplier effects.

Direct measures

The Budget provides some direct measures to increase home ownership especially for first time homebuyers, as well as the more vulnerable groups of the



market. Most other property sectors are expected to benefit indirectly from the focus given to spur growth in high-value services activities, industrial investments and infrastructure enhancements.

Also, in continuing to emphasise inclusiveness in economic growth and with particular reference to Bumiputera's holdings in real estate, Pelaburan Hartanah Bhd is to continue its role with an allocation of RM750mil under the 12th Malaysia Plan. This includes replicating their strategies to optimise the value of Malay Reservation Lands in strategic high-potential locations.

For the residential sector, the full stamp duty exemptions on instruments

of transfer and loan agreements for first time purchasers for house price of up to RM500,000 from the existing RM300,000 will help reduce the upfront financial burden of home buying.

Enforced for the period from Jan 1, 2021 to Dec 31, 2025, this would ease first time home buyers especially within the B40 and M40 group, and encourage home ownership - notwithstanding the other underlying issues such as affordability, house prices and disposable income levels in the market.

Though it is unclear, we hope that such exemption is applicable for purchases from both developers in the primary market as well as in the

Property sector to improve along with the positive economic growth projection.

secondary market.

This would help expand the options for these first time home buyers as well as complementing Penjana short-term economic recovery plan's RPGT exemption and Home Ownership Campaign that are in place to stimulate property market activities.

White knights

In addition, stamp duty exemptions are also provided for white knight contractors and original buyers of abandoned housing projects that have been vetted and approved by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. This will encourage white knight contractors to revive abandoned projects and bring those unfortunate buyers hope of finally possessing their completed units.

The focus on affordable, low-cost and medium-cost housing provision through the various government agencies is to continue with a RM1.2bil allocation for various programmes including for 14,000 Program Perumahan Rakyat units, 3,000 Rumah Mesra Rakyat by SPNB, maintenance and repair of low-cost homes and for the Civil Service Housing Programme.

Continued focus on this segment is welcomed but based on past history, the challenge is in the implementation, efficiency and monitoring.

SEE PAGE 16

EVENT HIGHLIGHT

StarProperty to host first-ever virtual awards on Dec 29

FRESH off the heels from its first virtual property fair in September, omnichannel real estate portal StarProperty will now be organising its very first virtual awards ceremony.

The StarProperty Awards 2020 Real Estate Developer virtual ceremony is keeping with the trend of digitalisation to curb the spread of Covid-19 and ensure the safety of all those involved.

The awards will pay homage to the nation's premier real estate developers and the outstanding property developments that were launched in recent times.

Although this year marks the fifth iteration of the prestigious awards, it would be the first time since its conception in 2016 that the awards ceremony is being held virtually.

Winners were announced early this year via a special awards pullout in The Star Newspaper, as well as on various online mediums.



The awards ceremony, however, had been postponed owing to restrictions on large gatherings and the ongoing pandemic. The ceremony has now come to fruition in a virtual setting.

Also a first for this year's awards are the inclusion of the All-Star Awards, where winners are selected based on the quantifiable performance of their respective companies.

Each of the eight All-Star Award categories will only have one winner. The exception is the best overall performers which involve the top 15 developers.

Property developers across Malaysia are expected to witness the virtual awards ceremony which will be broadcasted on the StarProperty Facebook page.

Members of the public are welcomed to watch the presentation ceremony and participate in an online contest.

RM 10 e-vouchers will be given out at a later date to

the first 100 participants who answered the contest questionnaire during the live event on Dec 29 correctly. Like and follow StarProperty's facebook page to stay updated.

To learn more about the winners of the StarProperty Awards 2020: Real Estate Developer, visit <http://awards.starproperty.my/national/2020>

Overhang property precipitate developers' hangover

Divergence of location, type of property and prices contribute to growing number of unsold units

Contributed by **CHANG KIM LOONG**

THE unreleased Bumiputera lots contribute to about 40% to 50% of the country's overhang numbers. And the number continues to grow.

Many completed houses in certain states were unsold because the state governments do not want to release the Bumiputera lots, according to Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association (Rehda) president Datuk Soam Heng Choon at the press conference during the recent Malaysia Property Expo 2020.

"Everybody needs to play their roles in trying to resolve this issue. The state government controls the release of unsold Bumi lots, so the state government needs to come in and help the situation," he said.

Government agencies should also refrain from building homes in poorly chosen sites as the divergence of location, type of property and prices contribute to the high overhang number as well.

The National Property Information Centre's (Npic) Property Market Status Report for the first half of 2020 (1H20) showed there were 31,661 overhang residential units worth RM20.03bil, an increase by 3.3% in volume and 6.4% in value from the 30,664 units worth RM18.82bil recorded in 2H19.

The State of Johor retained the highest number and value of residential overhang in the country with 6,166 units worth RM4.74bil, accounting to 19.5% and 23.7% respectively of the national total in the period.

It also maintained its reign as the highest serviced apartment overhang state in 1H20 with 73.7% share in volume (15,986 units) and 76.7% share in value (RM14.67bil), with almost all of these overhang units being in the Johor Bahru district.

The overhang in the serviced apartment sub-sector continues to rise and form the bulk of commercial property overhang, recording a total of 21,683 units valued at RM18.64bil, up by 26.5% in volume and 24% in value against 17,142 units worth RM15.04bil recorded in the June to December 2019 period.

A new standard

Proactive measures for a timely release mechanism of Bumiputera lots: The National House Buyers Association (HBA) believes the move by the Perak State government to allow faster release of Bumiputera lots is a step in the right direction and will ultimately benefit all in the long run.

Effective April 1, 2019, the Perak State government allowed housing developers to apply for properties under

the Bumiputera quota to be released to other buyers if the properties were unsold by the Perak Housing and Property Board after six months.

It was reported that 50% of the Bumiputera quota can be released to other non-Bumiputera buyers with these conditions:

- The physical construction has achieved 30%.
- That 60% of the non-Bumiputera lots have been sold. The balance of 50% of the Bumiputera quota can be released with the following conditions:
 - After physical construction has reached 80%.
 - That 90% of the non-Bumiputera lots have been sold.

The Perak government policy vis-à-vis Bumiputera release mechanism is still subsisting. Those housing developers who sell Bumiputera lots to non-Bumiputera buyers without the state's prior approval would be subjected to fines or double the levy payment.

Such proactive initiatives should be emulated by other states in Peninsular Malaysia. With this step, developers will be able to reduce holding costs and thus bring down house prices provided they do not conveniently up their profit margin.

There are many costs incurred in building a house that common buyers can relate to such as the costs of the land and the construction including labour and building materials. However, an important cost factor that many people may overlook is time — the longer the housing developer or the building contractor takes to finish building a project or to sell off their properties, the higher the cost incurred.

The holding cost will eventually be transferred to future house buyers both Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera via the house price.

Most developers will factor in their budget, the anticipated holding cost for three years since the current mechanism dictates so. Developers have been complaining about the release mechanism of Bumiputera lots as being not transparent, not consistent, and differing in each state.

HBA had called for more transparent and consistent policies for the automatic release of Bumiputera lots and the move by the Perak State government is indeed a step in the right direction.

Such policies that benefit the people and bringing down the costs of compliance must be heralded.

In the case of Malay Reserved Land (MRL), it can only be owned and held by Malay ethnic owners. Compared to Bumiputera quotas, MRL is virtually impossible to be legally released to non-Malays.

Furthermore, several other characteristics distinguish MRL from Bumiputera quotas. The following are a



few of those features:

- All property built on MRL is to be exclusively sold to Malays only.
- Malay owners are not allowed to rent out properties built on MRL or the land to non-Malays.
- All businesses that operate on MRLs must be owned by Malays.

MRL's enormous potential

There is great potential in developing MRL especially those located in the urban and not so rural areas. It is the product that is developed on the land that will ultimately determine the economic value of the land.

The main reason MRL lagged in development is the inability of their owners to view their land as a strategic economic asset. The government has to look into this as part of its agenda to uplift the economic development of the Malays.

Looking at its huge potential, much more has to be done to make the property development sector more popular among the Malays. Once developed into housing schemes, they can be exclusively for the Malays' wellbeing and shelter for their families.

Already, there are numerous housing projects on MRL exclusively for Malays. Wakaf land or land endowments made by Muslims also have vast potential for development but not enough people have thought about doing this.

In Malaysia, more than 88% of Wakaf land, amounting to about 30,000ha, is left underutilised or idle. If the potential

An aerial view of Johor Bahru. The state retained the highest number and value of residential overhang in the country.

of such land is unlocked, it can help improve the socio-economic status of Muslims.

It was reported in 2017 that there was more than 10,120ha of Wakaf land in the country that can be developed into commercial and residential projects. We suggest that the relevant authorities help unlock the value since there is a high demand for homes within certain urban areas.

Some Wakaf land resides in high-value areas, facilitating the potential for profitable development. Most of the property overhang was due to a lack of emphasis on market studies related to less strategic locations and it is timely to undertake the development of Wakaf land.

Priority must be given to the formulation of the Wakaf Land Act. We hope that a house currently costing RM400,000 can be sold for half the price in a Wakaf land scheme.

In conclusion, HBA proposes vis-a-vis the Bumiputera quota (bear in mind that this is not exclusively for the Malays but covers other Bumiputera ethnicities) for the state and federal authorities through the National Land Council to devise a standardised and transparent system for unlocking the Bumiputera quota for overhang properties in the footsteps of the Perak state government.

Perhaps, they could initiate a working group committee to study the nuts and bolts for such objective calling in the expertise from the authorities, academia, civil society, Rehda and all other stakeholders. And take a tip from HBA's adage: Build the right number at the right location for the right population at the right price and with the right type. 🏡



Datuk Chang Kim Loong is the honorary secretary-general of the National House Buyers Association, a non-governmental and not-for-profit organisation manned wholly by volunteers.

A confluence of conveniences with Alaris

From education to recreation, everywhere is in easy reach

A new parcel set within mother nature's dwelling, Nusari Bayu by Matrix Concepts Holdings Berhad, welcomes its latest edition Alaris into the fold. This new phase represents a range of two-storey link homes, surrounded by an affluent neighbourhood of Semi-Ds.

Centered around the concept of connectivity and conveniences, residents get to enjoy a wide array of living elements just a stone's throw away. In line with the tagline Stay Closer to Practically Everything, commercial needs are fulfilled by the nearby commercial hubs, while the Matrix Global Schools and SJK(C) Bandar Sri Sendayan provides quality education for families with children.

Towards the south, career opportunities will bloom with the 1,100-acre Sendayan TechValley. A modern technology park with a superior infrastructure network, it is designed to appeal to various range of industries, from manufacturing to knowledge-based businesses.

Spread across 6.33 acres of land, the d'Tempat Country Club welcomes residents with 380,000 sq ft worth of facilities and amenities, ranging from a spa, Olympic-sized swimming pool, gym, aqua gym, badminton, squad and tennis court as well as a cineplex. Home buyers are entitled to a five-term membership at the club.

The development itself consists of a total of 192 units. With a price ranging from RM511,999, each unit comes with a built-up ranging from 2,141 sq ft, four bedrooms and three bathrooms.

A dry and wet kitchen is also included. These houses are spaciouly designed with practicality



in mind making it a comfortable home for multi-generation living. The abundance of greenscapes and recreational spaces will suit the needs of even the most discerning resident. Alaris is also sited in the township

of Bandar Sri Sendayan, touted as the country's sixth economic corridor through Malaysian Vision Valley 2.0. This marks a good potential for long term investment besides homestay. The development also commands

good accessibility via the north-south highway, KLIA Linkage and the Port Dickson Highway allows residents unparalleled reach to other key parts of the country. Alaris is scheduled for completion in quarter four of 2022. 🏠

ABOVE Alaris spans 23 acres of freehold land.



LEFT The facade layout.

ABOVE The development itself hosts a playground, reflexology paths, outdoor gym station and badminton court.

ALARIS

— Nusari Bayu —

Beyond the lush surroundings of a scenic living environment lies **ALARIS** a new parcel set within mother nature dwelling. Be part of this thriving community and enjoy nature's beautiful bounty.

2-Storey Link Homes / 20' x 70' / 2,141 sq.ft.



MATURED
Neighbourhood



SECURED
Enclave



Next to **SJK(C)**
Bandar Sri Sendayan



Near to
COMMERCIAL HUB



Petronas Petrol Station

SJK(C) Bandar Sri Sendayan

Commercial Hub

Matrix Global Schools

d'Tempat Country Club

Artist's Illustration

Nurturing Environments, Enriching Lives.



Head Office
Wisma Matrix, No.57, Jalan Tun Dr. Ismail,
70200 Seremban, Negeri Sembilan D.K. Malaysia
T +606 764 2688 F +606 764 6288

Matrix Galleria @ d'Tempat
PT 12653, Jalan Pusat Dagangan Sendayan 1
71950 Bandar Sri Sendayan, Negeri Sembilan D.K. Malaysia
T +606 792 2868 F +606 792 2878
GPS Coordinate Code 2.674820, 101.863722

1800 88 2688



Prestige of Golf-Resort Living Made Attainable

Lifestyle change begins at Ion Forte Green City

ION Forte Green City (IFGC) by NCT Group is a rare blend of a resort-style mixed development that offers a premium lifestyle experience, abundant amenities and rail connectivity without commanding a hefty price tag.

The masterpiece development has five phases sprawled across 23 acres of land within the 75-hectares Ayer Keroh Country Club (AKCC) in Melaka.

Anchored by a 27-hole golf course certified by the Malaysia Golf Association, the course is capable of hosting international golf tournaments.

Envision waking up to views overlooking natural forests, pristine lakes and manicured green plains. Boast about the included golf membership offered to IFGC homebuyers before a tee off with friends on the fairways.

Indulge in a five-star living experience with an integrated master plan within a golf-resort, also a first for the state of Melaka. Shop and dine to heart's content along the retail boulevard before retiring to the residences above.

Beyond the opulence, IFGC also has far more to offer insatiable homebuyers or investors in terms of practicality and value. Various government institutions and industrial hubs lay in the vicinity of Ayer Keroh. The Melaka International Trade Center (MITC) is merely five minutes away making IFGC apt for business travellers.

Melaka's rich heritage makes it one of Malaysia's most prominent tourist destinations for locals and foreigners alike. Zoo Melaka is close by and historical attractions in the city are a short drive away. Business and tourism will be further bolstered via the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High-Speed Rail (HSR) at Ayer Keroh.

It is easy to see why IFGC is dubbed a masterpiece development by its builders. Crowned by a roof cantilever, the eye-catching facade incorporates 72 different designs for added sophistication and luxury. Lush landscaping and water elements dot the common areas in harmony with the scenic surroundings.

A variety of unit types are available, catered either for individuals or multigenerational families of all sizes. The development will comprise of a condotel, branded residences, a retail boulevard, wellness suites and retirement villas.

Primed for investment, condotel units range from a studio to three-bedroom and two bathrooms at a built-up range 422 sq ft to 1,024 sq ft. These 250 condotel units will be managed by a hotel operator.

These 437 units of branded residences elevate the own-stay experience. Built-ups are from 569 sq ft to 1,974 sq ft and layouts are available in studio to four-bedroom and three bathrooms



The facade of IFGC encapsulates the essence of grandeur.

configurations. Lavish duplex units on the highest floors will be the *crème de la crème* of IFGC's branded residences.

Additionally, selected condotel and branded residences will offer a dual-key layout, ideal for multigenerational living. Facilities for residents also include a wading pool, swimming pool, gym, meditation terrace and a sky deck, just to name a few.

A total of 50 retail lots in the lower floors are set to see alfresco dining restaurants, specialty shops as well as exciting retail experiences. These lots, ranging from 583 sq ft to 1997 sq ft,



Enjoy exquisite urban living at Ion Forte Green City.

make IFGC a self-contained development complete with modern conveniences.

Ultimately, IFGC is best surmised as a Masterpiece Development where one can stay, dine, play and stay entertained within the confines of a golf resort. Ideal as a holiday home or as a permanent residence for those looking to substitute the stresses of living in a concrete jungle for a tranquil lifestyle serenaded by nature.

Add the sensibility of dual-key units, the HSR and tourism into the mix, IFGC presents itself as the real estate of choice not to be missed.

Best of all, IFGC is well within

the means of the average Malaysian despite the allure of a premium lifestyle experience, with prices starting from just RM380,800.

Homebuyers and investors will not be left wanting as attractive perks are available to sweeten the deal. A special preview and ownership package and is available for registrations made during pre-launch.

The first precinct of the development is slated for completion on the second quarter of 2024. Visit the newly opened sales gallery of Ion Forte Green City at Ayer Keroh Country Club to learn more. [📍](#)

Relax and regenerate amidst a vibrant yet calming experience.





GREEN CITY | AKCC

In Nature's Embrace

The warmth of the sun, the cool breath of the lake, and the meticulous greens of the golf course - Ion Forte Green City is a landscape of tranquility created to grow with you. Every moment is a celebration of place, allowing you to focus your time on creating lifelong memories with your loved ones.

Immerse yourself in the benchmark of elegance at our Sales Gallery today or call 06-2930866



Discover true luxury
www.ionforte.com
019-2509288

Things will never be the

A slew of changes are set for the property

By VIKTOR CHONG, JOSEPH WONG
and VIGNESWAR RAJASURIAN

THE Covid-19 pandemic is continuing to change the face of normalcy in unprecedented ways. This highly infectious disease which wreaked havoc across the globe and has infected nearly 74 million people and killed over 1.6 million as of Dec 16.

While uncertainty and confusion continues to reign, the only certainty is that the world will not be the same even if a cure is found. As the world reaches its ninth month grappling with the virus and its impact, the nation's property industry struggles to deal with the fallout.

Other industries are equally affected but it is the property sector that is reacting to the pandemic a little more than others. This is because suddenly millions of the nation's population were suddenly given a fresh take of how important a home actually is.

The movement control order (MCO) forced just about everyone to be confined to their homes, whether they are young or old. And it was during this period that both owners and renters discovered what is lacking or obsolete in the post-coronavirus world.

In response, many developers are rapidly rethinking their future projects. Projects under construction are being re-designed and redrawn. Changes and tweaks are made solely due to a shift in demand.

More than surface changes

The new frontier that every developer seems to agree on is re-assessing the construction materials from a health and sanitation standpoint to the supply chain perspective.

This change is more than just skin-deep. It will bore right into the heart of construction from the drawing board to the choice of building materials. The priority, now more than ever, is to create sanitary and safe environments that people can enjoy.

"To combat the pandemic threat, building materials could incorporate antimicrobial polymer surfaces, copper and alloy or low dust retention fixtures and fittings.

"According to studies, the virus stays on copper for only 4 hours. It lasts for 24 hours on cardboard and two to three days on plastic and stainless steel. Optimally 5 to 10% of the premises need to be designated for ventilation purposes to reduce the possibility of infection," said Our Hong Kong Foundation Ltd land and housing research head Ryan Ip.

This new trend is not just among developers and contractors but also among homeowners.

"Based on observations, especially when the MCOs began to ease, there has been an increase in paint consumption as individuals take on home renovation projects as well as DIY (do-it-yourself) initiatives to makeover spaces or items within the household," said Nippon Paint Malaysia assistant general manager Datin Wong Meng Lee.

The pandemic has increased the general

public's awareness and market demand for coating solutions which benefit the health and wellness aspects has seen an increase, she said.

"This includes paints that are low in volatile organic compound (VOC) as well as anti-viral and anti-bacterial coatings. Additionally, the unprecedented times brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic revealed the creative side of Malaysian homeowners," she said.

In terms of township, active transport forms should be promoted instead of the enclosed space of the light rail transit (LRT) or mass rapid transit (MRT), Ip said.

"This can take the form of bicycles or improved connections for walkability. Cities should also reserve capacities like land, material, and monetary funds for contingency uses. An example would be the erection of temporary isolation flats and test centres to avoid a crisis," he said.

Infusion of tech solutions

Technology innovations is seeing a spike as developers look into containing areas where the virus can spread.

"Now we could find contactless tech solutions ranging from the outermost to the innermost of property developments. Homes are now being equipped with many hands-free tech. Some good examples are wireless smart voice assistant devices such as Google Home, Alexa and Homepod," said Perfect Smart Touch Solutions (Smartouch) CEO Arivendran Sivanyanam.

He pointed out that commonly touched areas like door knobs and handles are touched by several people, which makes these spots the most susceptible to germs and bacteria collection.

"A simple-yet-productive solution is placing a gesture sensor to allow access for automated doors in common areas," he said, adding that automated doors can also be implemented in a simplified version for existing homes.

For actively common spaces such as gyms, he said sensors will act as a trigger point to automate the lights and air conditioner.

Other existing technology that can be used includes QR code which can be used to register visitors and facial recognition technology for homeowners, he said.

"Therefore, touch points will be reduced," he said.

It's still basics

Certainly, the demand from property buyers has seen a shift although the basics remain the same.

Association of Valuers, Property Managers, Estate Agents and Property Consultants in the Private Sector Malaysia (PEPS) president Michael Kong said the general demand for features, pricing, layout or any other selling point remained mostly unchanged.

"In general, landed residential properties are still the favourite. However, within different locational sectors, the types of



property differ due to various other factors and considerations.

"For instance, within urban KL location, stratified developments are preferred due to limited landed property offerings as well as price considerations," he said.

"At the outer fringe of KL, lifestyle developments are more favoured as it gives a luxurious resort living and back to nature feeling. In the past, we see a lot of mega township developments that offer generous infrastructure, luxurious resort lifestyles and green or eco environment living," Kong pointed out.

One noticeable change is that developers are now less eager to embark on large scale developments anymore and prefer smaller pocket developments, he said.

As for the millennials, Kong said they generally prefer strata properties, which are smaller and easier to manage than landed properties.

"In addition, they prefer developments within urban and modern areas with sufficient amenities and facilities. Proximity to the workplace is also a major consideration to millennials who spend a large part of their time working and socialising with friends, colleagues and business associates," he said.

Millennials seem to want smaller units that are tech savvy, added Rahim & Co International Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Siva Shanker.

"They are also conscious of the look

ABOVE
Plans might have to be redrawn for existing projects.

and feel, branding, and services that the development appears shopping centre down the road," he said.

For families, landed more spacious layout

RIGHT
To combat the pandemic threat, construction materials could incorporate anti-microbial polymer surfaces, copper and alloy.



same again

Property sector



and are interested in the various development can offer. Integrated to be the choice where there is a stairs and an LRT station across

and properties with larger and that come with extra room

and study that can be converted into a home office is preferred, said University Malaya associate professor Dr Rosli Said.

With physical distancing in mind, many are opting to shift away from the KL city centre and the Klang Valley hotspots as these are more densely populated areas, he said.



The unprecedented times brought about by the pandemic reveals the creative side of Malaysian homeowners, said Wong.



Homes are now being equipped with many hands-free tech, said Arivendran.

Going digital

DURING this tumultuous time of the Covid-19 pandemic, countless companies have reevaluated their operations and have taken the obvious route: going digital.

Going digital refers to moving from in-person contact to online and while this method of doing business has virtually exploded especially with the service related industry like food delivery and grocery shopping, the property sector is also using the digital platform.

There are already numerous virtual property fairs in the market in oppose to physical fairs that were held in the recent past. Developers have virtual showrooms which potential buyers can visit from home or at the click of a button just about anywhere.

Webinars and consultations can be made through numerous platforms. This online push would likely have not been as effective had it not been for the pandemic.

Following the success of developers going digital, property related industry players are going on the online platform.

Taking a leaf from home furnishings Ikea, smaller players are selling do-it-yourself (DIY) furniture like tables, chairs and benches that can be compacted and shipped out.

Others like Nippon Paint Malaysia also embarked on the opportunity to launch the industry's first online store to ensure a seamless and safe shopping journey for its consumers.

"The Nippon Paint E-store enabled consumers to shop from the comfort of their own homes, with the convenient process of having coatings solutions delivered right to their doorstep," said Nippon Paint Malaysia assistant general manager Datin Wong Meng Lee.

Perfect Smart Touch Solutions (Smartouch) CEO Arivendran Sivanyanam pointed out that the drivers for his trend are the consumers.

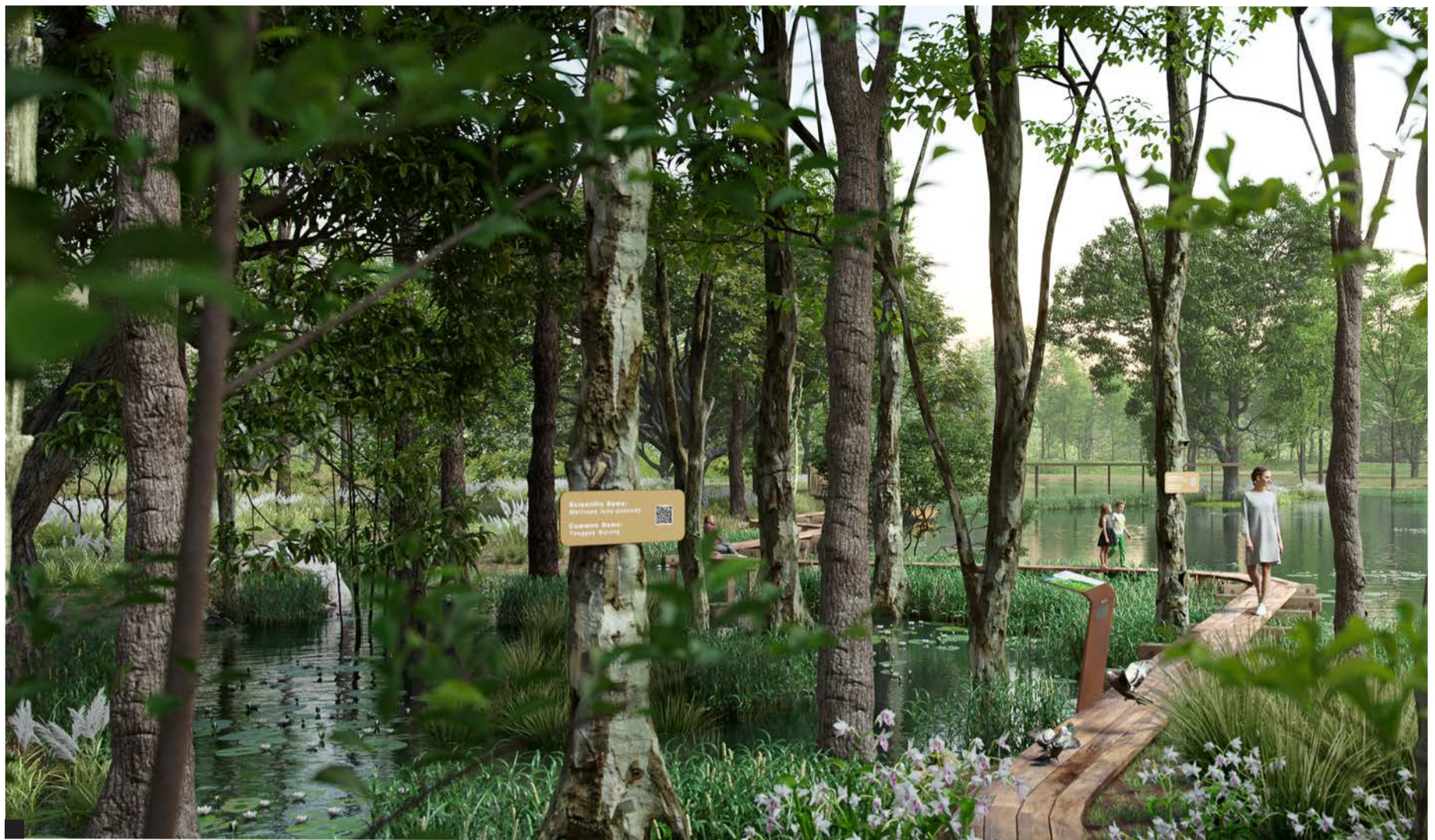
"The demand for smart home technology has tremendously increased. Being in the industry, we have realised this and took a swift to work closely in property developments where contactless smart home tech should be a necessity among the society," he said.

While property developers are more likely to infuse such solutions into new developments, it is the buyers who are demanding for homes that promote a healthier and more hygienic living, he said.

"In less than five years' time, most developments will be hands-free ready where it is completely automated. This includes residential and commercial developments," he said.

Technology like face recognition apps coming to the fore.





Connections to nature, like those found in the Wetlands Forest Park, Gamuda Cove, are high on home seeker priorities post-lockdown.

Planning a Post-Pandemic Future for Home Seekers



Incorporating work from home for property in the new normal



Open layouts in Illaria Hillside Homes create clear sightlines between spaces, allowing families to keep an eye on the children while they work.

Covid-19 is the biggest disruptor the world has seen in the last century.

As countries around the world ease their Covid-19 lockdowns with varying degrees of success, many are already looking towards the future, despite how challenging the past year has been.

Across industries, we have witnessed how the world grapples to co-exist with the coronavirus in various new norms. Some of the key trends observed include higher appreciation for nature and open public spaces, a need for better digital infrastructure to stay connected, migration from the city to suburban areas where living spaces are more generous, and perhaps the most visible change – working or learning remotely from home.

As people are confined within their homes now more than ever, a spotlight has been cast upon the way homes can accommodate and adapt to the demands of this new unforeseen era.

Known for creating developments that stand the test of time, Gamuda Land is investing time, resources and efforts to understand new and emerging trends towards a post-pandemic future. Backed by talents from various fields of expertise in property development, Gamuda Land has initiated GL Planning for The Future.

The initiative is a think tank led by its product management unit to specifically conduct research, planning and design for the evolving needs of future home homes to ensure Gamuda Land remains at the forefront of innovation. As a result of careful planning and deliberation, the developer is adapting its home designs with a focus on innovative home typologies throughout its projects.

Crediting Gamuda Land's town-making principles, which the developer continuously improved over the last 25 years, Gamuda Land CEO Ngan Chee Meng said: "Our township masterplans have always been people-centric, designed for the community to live in harmony with nature, which is one of the key things that people sought during the MCO."

"We placed upfront investment in ensuring our infrastructure is in place, and we ensure that we get the places in our townships right so our community has access to necessities near home. When our town-making foundation is solid, we can keep our focus on adapting our products to cater to homebuyers' current and future needs."

Backed by strong insights, Gamuda Land is placing emphasis on features such as spatial quality, natural lighting and ventilation, extended functionality of space and an emphasis on a closer connection to nature, blurring the boundaries between the outside and the inside, as it gears towards a post-pandemic Malaysia.

"Homes with extended usage throughout the day will see a need to be more environmentally sustainable and energy efficient, with increased indoor quotients. Every effort to achieve this through passive measures has been incorporated into our new design approach," he explained.

Reinventing home spaces

With this pandemic, homes will need to accommodate a greater number of amenities and functions. Designated spaces for specific activities such as reading, napping, working and entertainment will be desired.

"Hosting a greater array of activity spaces will require a greater degree of flexibility and adaptability. By creating voids or courtyards that serve as private sanctuaries and new spatial experiences, we also encourage natural cross-ventilation within the home," said Devendran Krishnamoorthy, Gamuda Land general manager, Product Management Unit.

These features have been incorporated into Gamuda Land's upcoming residential launches, including Illaria Hillside Homes in Gamuda Gardens, Sungai Buloh and Enso Woods in Gamuda Cove, Southern Klang Valley.

Illaria Hillside Homes

As part of its post-pandemic design approach, Gamuda Gardens has adopted an overall green living concept by tweaking conventional home layouts, introducing green pockets and flexible spaces offering better functionality and purpose within each home.

"With this approach, we anticipate direct and indirect benefits to one's health and wellbeing by allowing an abundance of natural lighting and ventilation in our designs, without sacrificing user comfort," Devendran explained.

Small green pockets were introduced in Illaria Hillside Homes backyards as outdoor spaces for family activities which can also be used as children's play areas where parents can easily keep an eye on them while working or doing house chores.

"Throughout our post-pandemic home design, the challenge was to explore architectural design features that enhance quality of space and convey a sense of luxury, all within a compact living space," Devendran said.

Gamuda Land addresses this through a double volume pantry for its Illaria Hillside Homes units.

"Besides giving it a stylish aesthetic, it also enhances the quality of light drawn into the centre of the living space. Hence, it addresses the challenge of poor natural light quality, especially for intermediate units optimising passive sustainability," he shared.

Another unique design feature incorporated into Illaria Hillside Homes is a children's play room laid out next to the backyard garden, creating a visual link to the kitchen. This enables parents to monitor their children while cooking. The room can also potentially be converted into a workspace. With an abundance of natural lighting streaming in from every corner and the direct link to the garden, this room is ideal as a working space.

Flexibility of the home space is also prioritised throughout the design to suit different needs and lifestyle options. For instance, the middle bedroom in Illaria Hillside Homes can be turned into an office space or a family entertainment area, where the dividing wall can be removed, maximising interior volumes and enhancing freedom to move indoors.

"To allow design flexibility, walls and structures were carefully planned to be adaptable for future needs," said Devendran.



Enso Woods, Gamuda Cove is set for launch in February 2021.

Enso Woods, Japanese minimalist inspired design

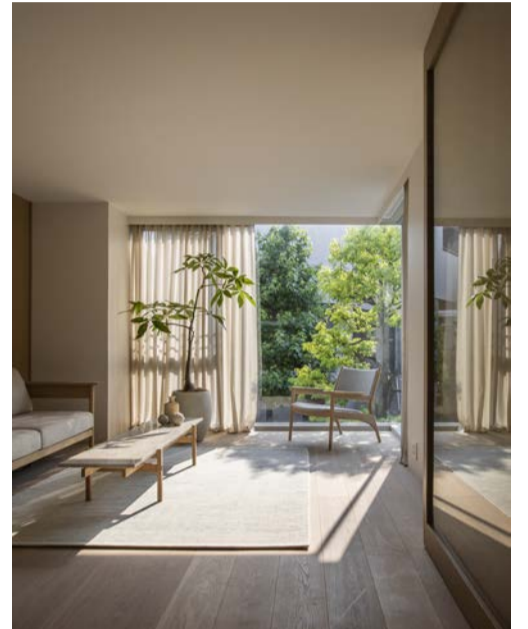
Inspired by the Japanese concept of *danshari*, the philosophy of achieving more with less, Enso Woods focuses on flexibility of space enabling greater practicality of usage. Overlooking a 60-acre central park, the project's natural landscapes complement its future-forward functionality, leveraging on the township's 5G infrastructure for next-generation connectivity.

Its double and triple-storey terrace homes feature a modern, minimalist aesthetic, evoking stress-free simplicity with underlying tones of elegance and grace in service of the project's guiding principle: "Life. In Perfect Balance".

"With Enso Woods, we started the design with an open plan layout to encourage a visual expansion of space. The ground floor focuses on this, providing flexibility in space planning and usage," Devendran said, adding that allocation has also been made for flexi-lifestyle corners next to the living room and outdoor terrace to create a private space where people can indulge in their hobbies. Meanwhile, an outdoor terrace offers a seamless transition between the indoors and outdoor garden.

Targeted to launch in February 2021, Enso Woods will be the latest offering in Gamuda Cove, sprawling across 1,530 acres next to the Kuala Langat North Forest Reserve in Klang Valley's southern growth corridor.

"As a town-maker, looking to the future is part and parcel of what we do. This is particularly true for our townships, as they take years to develop. When we embark on our masterplan, we don't just plan for the present – we envision what people will need in the years to come. These are the insights that are driving our new launches, as we take into consideration current trends and future trends to deliver homes that stand the test of time," said Ngan.



The design for Enso Woods, Gamuda Cove, emphasises an open plan layout to encourage a visual expansion of space. (Photo credit: Karimoku Case Study)



Enso Woods, Gamuda Cove features a modern, minimalist aesthetic inspired by the Japanese concept of *danshari*.

The next normal: Work near home



Outdoor workspaces at Illaria Hillside Homes, Gamuda Gardens, allow residents and visitors to maximise productivity amid conducive natural environments.

With most of the workforce across industries working from home throughout most of 2020, conversations about adaptability to this new normal are getting stronger. Experts' reports indicate that there is a growing preference among employees to work remotely, enabling them to avoid daily commuting traffic and affording them better flexibility in managing their time.

"Since Malaysians entered RMCO, we have noticed a transition from working from home towards working

near home where people choose a place to work nearby their home be it in a café or a public environment," said Devendran.

"To complement the new trend of post-pandemic living, we have introduced community spaces that are functional for social gatherings and work in our developments. Work-near-home is an idea to identify a balance between getting the office work done without distraction while at the same time being near your home, where you can attend to house needs without worrying



The Community Hub at Gamuda Cove brings the we and me space together. (Photo credit: Karimoku Case Study)

about having to travel far," Devendran added.

While working from home allows flexibility, some may feel a sense of isolation and prefer to work among people.

"Keeping to Gamuda Gardens' theme of living amidst lush greenery, we incorporated a co-working space surrounded by nature's tranquillity at the Illaria Hillside Homes precinct, where people can work, network or chill in a lush alcove," said Devendran, adding that this co-working space will feature a modern outdoor office concept equipped with furniture and high-speed Wi-Fi connectivity.

Illaria Hillside Homes' co-working space also features a cineBOX which has dual functions. During the day, it can be a place where meetings are held while come night time, it can be turned into a movie theatre for community gatherings. It is equipped with basic facilities like a projector screen and audiovisual equipment.

In Gamuda Cove, plans are underway to build a Community Hub in the upcoming Enso Woods precinct where residents can organise group meetings or work remotely in individual working pods with retractable screens and roof covers. The Community Hub is fully air-conditioned for users' comfort.

Featuring individual or group working spaces, a dining zone, plug and play zone as well as community farming plots and a solar rooftop, this Community Hub at Enso Woods is planned with the people and the environment in mind.

Staying true to its people and nature-centric design and planning approach, Gamuda Land is once again at the forefront of innovation to deliver sustainable value for its customers in the years to come.



The Community Hub at Gamuda Cove features diverse co-working facilities arranged around central community farming plots.

GAMUDA GARDENS

MAKING GOOD TOWNS THAT STAND THE TEST OF TIME

One of the things we do as a town maker is to be able to create a sense of place. Where people and nature can come together, and share a common ground to call home.

It's really about mindful planning and to be able to work with nature. Like how we try not to change the terrain and preserve the natural land contour. And how we allow the land to return to its natural state to encourage the spread of flora and fauna.

When we work with the land this way there is a respect for what was there before us.

It's how we work with nature and how we work with the land, to create a place for generations to come.

ILLUARIA



*Artist's impression only

**Sincere
Responsible
Original**

Bandar Serai Development Sdn Bhd
(201301020260 (1050090-W))
Gamuda Gardens Experience Gallery,
Persiaran Gamuda Gardens 1, Bandar Gamuda Gardens,
48050, Kuang, Selangor.
Tel: 03 6037 2888



gamudaland.com.my
03 2727 7438

All information contained here (including figures, specifications, plan measurements and illustrations) are subject to amendments, variations and modifications without notification as may be required by the relevant authorities or developers consultants and is not intended to form and cannot form part of an offer or contract. All images, pictures, plans and illustrations are artist's impressions only and may be subject to changes. Whilst every reasonable care has been taken in preparing this information, the developer cannot be held liable for any variation or inaccuracy.

By VIKTOR CHONG
viktorchong@thestar.com.my

ON the backdrop of falling oil prices and political uncertainty, the Covid-19 pandemic has entered as the third black swan to place a major dampener on the property market. Even before, the trend has reflected a rather lacklustre market since its peak in 2012, following a downward movement influenced by the overhang situation.

This trend is predicted to continue for the foreseeable future, a statement corroborated by University Malaya Associate Professor Rosli Bin Said.

He said the country's economic cycle will influence the real estate cycle after a time lag of around one to two years.

Hence, alarming signals observed through the economy is an indication, among them, the shrinkage of gross domestic product by 17.1%, the first contraction since the third quarter of 2009, making it the steepest fall since the fourth quarter of 1998, Asian Financial Crisis.

This is followed by the decline of private consumption by 18.5% in the second quarter of 2020 amidst the strict MCO. Also, the Consumer Price Index fell by 1.4% in Sept against 121.8 in the same month of the preceding year while the unemployment rate escalated to 4.7%.

Drawing information from the Asian Financial Crisis, he said a shock to the housing market led to a decline in house prices, followed by a four year period before reaching a steady-state level.

If the Covid-19 situation bears similarity with the Asian Financial Crisis, with the assumption that the vaccine is viable, then the market should begin to recover by 2023, reaching pre-covid levels at 2027 and peaking in seven years by 2034.

Currently, the National Property Information Centre (Napic) recorded a drop of 27.9% in volume of property transactions and a further drop of 31.5% in value (for the first half of 2020, comparative to the first half of 2019).

This is possibly due to the strict movement control order imposed during the earlier part of the year, an overhang market and the resulting adverse buyer sentiment.

Rahim & Co International Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Siva Shankar said there is an oversupply situation in every sector, with over 54,000 units from the residential portion.

"And this does not include another 30,000 over units under construction, which will complete in the next year or so," he said. Then there are the other 100,000 or so units bought by individuals on a speculation basis, which

Drop in volume and value by sub-sector (H1 of 2020 comparative to H1 of 2019)

Sector	Unit	%	Value (Bil RM)	%
Residential	75,318	-24.6	25.61	-26.1
Commercial	8,118	-37.4	8.51	-33.2
Industrial	1,980	-36.9	5.41	-23.0
Agriculture	23,206	-32.8	4.13	-39.1
Others	6,854	-28.6	3.27	-55.3

(Source: Napic and Rahim & Co)



Virus takes a toll

Transactions and value down across the board for year 2020

will then be placed into the market to compete with the available stocks.

To increase take-up rate, Siva said banks should be more loan friendly to facilitate purchase. Besides relying on the commercial banks, Rosli suggested the creation of mortgage banks or non-profit making entities in the form of credit unions. They can aid first-time homebuyers by offering a more affordable mortgage package, for example, a lower interest rate.

Foreign property purchase can also be relaxed as foreign ownership makes up around only 5% of the total ownership, Siva explained. From the supply side, developers should slow down property launches to avoid saturating the market with more stocks.

While residential properties make up the major portion of transactions in most countries, Siva believes the

63.68% (as of 2019) of residential property transactions in Malaysia may be excessive. This has yet to take into account the Small office and Home office (SOHO) and Small office and Versatile office (SOVO) units that are categorised under the commercial category.

One catalyst to this situation is the fact that alternative asset classes of investment are not provided to property investors.

Any spare fund on their part is placed into purchasing more residential units, which increases prices and creates a barrier of entry for homebuyers planning to buy for own stay purposes. To mitigate this, Siva suggests real estate investment trusts which pool investors' funds to purchase commercial or industrial properties.

Office space supply and occupancy as at 2019

	Kuala Lumpur	Selangor
Total supply	98,449,702.46	43,281,197.73
Incoming supply	15,913,526.00	1,956,921.89
Occupancy rate	78.3%	71.6%

(Source: Napic and Rahim & Co)

Moving over to the office spaces, the year 2019 charts a worrying total of

80.6% occupancy rate, with a total sq ft of around 243.16mil in Malaysia with an incoming supply of 25.59mil sq ft.

Operations will shrink as people become aware that they can work from home, although Siva believes that this arrangement may be hard to match the efficiency at the office.

"Closer to year 2021, I believe the occupancy levels will go to below mid-seventies or low seventies," he said, adding that the oversupply of office space requires attention.

Association of Valuers, Property Managers, Estate Agents and Property Consultants in the Private Sector Malaysia president Sr Michael Kong Kok Kee commented that this is a difficult situation to resolve due to the massive oversupply condition which has been prevalent for some time. Approvals for office developments should be carefully considered and effective demand must be established prior to approval lest it contributes further to the supply situation, he advised.

"I believe we require foreign investment to help absorb the massive

Retail space supply and occupancy as at 2019

	Kuala Lumpur	Selangor
Total supply	33,296,185.80	38,970,962.20
Incoming supply	7,267,813.56	5,748,907.46
Occupancy rate	83.4%	82.1%

(Source: Napic and Rahim & Co)



Kong believes the solution to the office space conundrum should be two-pronged, from both the supply and demand side.

oversupply currently. Investor and business-friendly policies should be introduced to attract MNCs to set up base here. We should strive to stay competitive vis-à-vis our regional neighbours such as Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia," said Kong.

Over to the retail sector, Malaysia in totality recorded 177.66mil sq ft



Rosli said all parties must cooperate to solve the overhang conundrum.

of spaces and an incoming supply of 21.01mil sq ft, with occupancy at 79.2%. "Second and third-tier malls appear to be struggling," said Siva, adding that those smaller malls with a bad tenant mix and a less favourable location may face the risk of emptying out or eventually turning into storage space. Ultimately, the presence of the vaccine



Anytime is still a good time to buy property as it is an appreciating asset and a good hedge against inflation, advised Siva.

itself will serve as an impetus to drive the market forward.

However, Siva cautioned that it might cause another wave of infection as people may get complacent.

On another note, Retail Group Malaysia managing director Tan Hai Hsin is optimistic towards the retail sector, saying that a rebound may

happen next year with a projected growth of 4.9% for 2021. However, this hinges on the covid-19 development in the country. He pointed out Klang Valley as a critical retail market for the whole country, and the continued restrictions on inter-district travel and inter-state travel will damage the entire retail industry.

Also, the opening of selected country borders by early next year is critical for many retail businesses that had been dependent on foreign tourists. They are important sales contributors to the Malaysian retail industry, especially in Penang, Klang Valley, Malacca, Johor Bahru and Sabah.

"I believe we require foreign investment to help absorb the massive oversupply currently. Investor and business-friendly policies should be introduced to attract MNCs to set up base here."

– Kong Kok Kee

The Top 8 suburbs of the next decade

OVER the years, there have been many suburbs that have seen a surge in property value and market demand due to a host of factors such as the introduction of infrastructure developments, retail developments that draw in a crowd as well as unique residential and commercial developments that add to the profile of the location.

StarProperty takes a look at the eight suburbs that are showing promises for the near future based on Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of terraced houses, shop lots and condominiums as well as existing and incoming infrastructure developments.



Kota Damansara

Kota Damansara has been an increasingly popular choice over the years due to its number of condominiums and connectivity to shopping malls and offices within the TTDI, Mutiara Damansara and Bandar Utama area.

Kota Damansara has also seen an influx of office spaces but it is the residential developments that are thriving with terraced houses enjoying a staggering 6.5% CAGR increase in the same period.

Damansara Heights

Damansara Heights has always been known for its luxurious catalogue of bungalows stacked along windy roads that are home to affluent individuals. The residential houses

within the area have always had a huge price tag with even smaller units running into the millions. In the beginning of 2016, terraced houses saw a dip in price under RM1,000 per sq ft (psf) until the MRT Line 1 was launched later in the year. As of 2019, the average price has returned to over RM1,000 psf and is on a steady incline.

Taman Tun Dr Ismail (TTDI)

TTDI has a reputation for quality neighbourhoods that have stood the test of time mostly consisting of terraced houses. Over recent years, there have been an influx of office towers like Menara KEN TTDI and Menara LGB, boasting tenants that include Deloitte and CIMB.

Shop offices here have seen a 1.5% CAGR increase between 2015 and 2019 with an average transacted price of RM4.75mil. TTDI's reputation for residential developments is further reinforced by the 1.6% CAGR increase in the same period. The influx of businesses is further complemented by the accessibility to the MRT Line 1.



Mont Kiara

This township went from an isolated rubber estate to a condominium haven within 30 years. Mont Kiara is a unique location with the large number of expatriates residing there, namely from South Korea and Japan. Despite the large number of condominiums

within the area, these developments are still holding their value and seeing price appreciation. Between 2015 and 2019, the average transacted price for a condominium increased by 1.3% CAGR lingering above the RM650 psf mark. Shop offices here have seen a 2.5% CAGR increase within the same period.



Kepong

Formerly recognised for tin mining until the emergence of Desa Park City that transformed this suburb into an upper class neighbourhood.

Although the surrounding developments are not as refined or conceptually sound as those in Desa Park City, they have enjoyed an increase in property value. For instance, shop offices in Bandar Manjalara saw a 2.3% CAGR increase in average transacted price between 2015 and 2018. Additionally, terraced houses here have seen a 4.6% CAGR increase to approximately RM600 psf.

Things are looking even better with the introduction of Kiara Bay, a RM15bil mixed development and the incoming MRT Line 2.

Sri Hartamas

Sri Hartamas is one of the smaller townships on this list, but one with solid landed residential developments and excellent connectivity especially to the NKVE and Penchala Link. Recognised as a high-end community with luxurious developments,

the introduction of Somerset Sri Hartamas, a serviced apartment with 308 units, is expected to spur demand further.

The existing number of condominiums within the area have enjoyed a 2.4% CAGR increase between 2015 and 2019 while terraced units have increased at the same amount within the same period.



Bukit Jalil

Bukit Jalil is mainly known for the National Sports Stadium that has held many events over the years. As of late, there have been more commercial developments emerging in the area providing businesses with more options to house their operations.

Between 2015 and 2019, shop offices here have seen a 1.6% CAGR increase with an average transacted price of RM1.96mil. The incoming MRT Line 2 will also complement the township with increased connectivity.

Bangsar

Bangsar is known to many as a high-end location with a reputation for pricey food and beverage options just outside the city centre area. Home to many expatriates and high networth individuals, it is a township that has commanded a great deal of demand over the years.

Although residential developments have seen a drop in price over the last few years, shop offices within the area have seen a sizeable increase of 3% CAGR with an average transaction value of RM7.2mil as of 2018. ↗

A blessed Christmas at Sunway Velocity Mall

More than just enjoying the festive season

CERTAINLY, Christmas is a time of giving and sharing with family and friends, and a reminder of the many things that everyone can be thankful for.

Despite undergoing a tumultuous year filled with uncertainties brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, Christmas tends to lift spirits.

With Christmas just around the corner, Sunway Velocity Mall's Blessed Christmas is a good place to celebrate the occasion and to wish for a brighter year in 2021.

The mall will run its Blessed Christmas celebrations until Jan 3, 2021. Of course, Santa will be present with his little helpers, to make Christmas fruitful for shoppers.

The little elves who are believed to be protectors and creatures of light are scattered around the mall to help Sunway Velocity Mall shoppers celebrate this Christmas.

Shoppers can immerse in the joy of this festive season with the Main Atrium fully embellished in Christmas decorations.

A giant 30 feet and uniquely decorated Christmas tree filled with toys became the highlight out of the many small trees surrounding the mall.

Most importantly, the Christmas atmosphere would not be complete

without the many strings of Christmas lights encircling the mall.

"It has been a tough year for all of us and Christmas is a special time of the year to reflect and count our blessings as we are still able to spend time and gather with our loved ones despite the uncertainties.

"This challenging time has taught us to make the best of what we have and be appreciative. Let us remember to also provide for those who are in need as we fight through this pandemic together," said Sunway Velocity Mall general manager Phang Sau Lian

"Christmas is about hope and giving. If you are shopping for a gift for your loved ones, the underprivileged or yourself, you can find a wide selection of booths and pushcarts around the mall; from categories such as fashion, accessories, beauty to gadgets, eyewear, books, stationaries, and many more," she said.

Shoppers can shop from the many outlets in the mall like Lacoste, Braun Buffel, Carlo Rino, G2000, Maison Berger Paris, Purely, Style Watch, JD Sports, and more.

Furthermore, shoppers get to reward themselves with amazing gifts from two tiers when they shop at Sunway Velocity Mall.

Those who spend a minimum of

RM300 (RM200 for Sunway Pals or Sunway Velocity Mall's mobile app users) in maximum two receipts can redeem a RM20 food and beverage cash voucher. Not only that, shoppers who spend RM600 (RM500 for Sunway Pals or Sunway Velocity Mall's mobile app users) in a maximum of four receipts will be able to redeem an exclusive eco-friendly storage jar.

Aside from that shoppers are able to enjoy additional weekday perks such as F&B or departmental store cash vouchers worth RM10 to RM20 on top of the Blessed Christmas redemption gifts.

The redemptions are made at the Main Atrium located on the Ground Floor. Shoppers can also take insta-worthy pictures at the different beautifully decorated photo-op areas in the mall and share their memories with friends and family.

"Make sure to drop by Sunway Velocity Mall to celebrate a Blessed Christmas with amazing redemption tiers, exclusive in-mall deals, and a well-rounded shopping experience," said Phang.

In midst of experiencing this wonderful festive season, the mall has implemented significant safety measures from social distancing procedures and mandatory temperature scanning to proper sanitization to assure shoppers a safe and



Sunway Velocity also has a mini Insta worthy corner located at the main atrium.

hygienic environment to be around.

Visit Sunway Velocity Mall's Facebook, Instagram, and website for more information. Don't forget to follow Sunway Velocity Mall's YouTube channel and TikTok for more fun contents!

"On behalf of Sunway Velocity Mall, we wish shoppers that this Christmas would bring them much peace, warmth and love. Merry Christmas," Phang added. 🎅

FROM PAGE 2

The rent-to-own scheme is also being promoted through a collaboration between the government and selected financial institutions to be implemented until 2022 for 5,000 units of Pr1ma housing. The scheme that was first introduced in the last budget under the past government, seems to have shifted from being a generic programme subject to a maximum house price of RM500,000 with an announced budget of RM10bil, to being focused on Pr1ma houses only.

There are similar collaborations in place over the past year driven as commercial ventures where the rent-to-own scheme's concept has been implemented for some of the participating private developments through partnerships with certain banks.

It is unsure how the response to such programmes or the government's scheme have been in the past year. Nevertheless, such a scheme is a good start to opening up new options to increase the market's accessibility to housing.

MM2H programme

A point to note is on the suspended MM2H programme of which the budget has fallen silent. The MM2H Programme was temporarily suspended earlier this year, in line with the government's decision not to allow foreigners to enter Malaysia following the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic.

The programme was originally scheduled to recommence this month but is now uncertain due to the recent spike of Covid-19

cases in the country.

For the non-residential sector, emphasis was placed especially on improving the business environment to drive investments as well as strengthening key sectors, and enhancing economic resilience through public infrastructure investments.

For the industrial sector, RM1bil special incentive package is allocated for high value-added technology investments, to support R&D activity in aerospace as well as electrical and electronics sectors in Batu Kawan Industrial Area, Penang and Kulim, Kedah with an additional RM500mil for High Technology Fund.

These augurs well with the relaxation of tax incentive conditions extended until Dec 31, 2022 for principal hubs, a new tax incentive for the establishment of the Global Trading Centre, increase sales value limit for activities at Free Trade Zone and bonded warehouses, and on-going tax incentives to be extended to 2022 for maintenance, repair and overhaul for aerospace, repair of ships, bionexus status and economic corridor developments.

Coupled with the proposed improvement to industrial park facilities including the RM100mil for infrastructure maintenance, internet improvement (RM42mil Jendela programme), water treatment plant and water supply systems, the high-multiplier industrial sector is to have a better position for growth.

This would be complemented with the expansive infrastructure investments proposed, be it transport-based infrastructure or regional development infrastructure.

Some RM15bil is allocated for transport infrastructure projects: Pan Borneo Highway in Sabah and Sarawak, Gemas-Johor Bahru electrified rail double tracking project, Klang Valley Double Tracking Project (Phase 1), Rapid Transit System Link (JB-Woodlands) and MRT3 in Klang Valley; while the High Speed Rail project is also to continue, subject to discussions with the Singapore Government.

A number of selected Regional Development Corridors projects are to continue including Kwasa Damansara development by EPF. These projects indeed have its benefits, and plans to roll them out would be much welcomed, but it remains to be seen how the market grows in the next 12 to 18 months - and whether its recovery amidst the other challenging factors will be opportune for the various stakeholders.

Hardest hit sectors

One of the hardest hit sectors, the tourism and hotel sector, would have called for more direct programmes and measures to help the sector players back on their feet.

Announcements made with regards to the sustainability of the tourism industry lack direct measures that hotel operators and travel agencies hoped for, like measures to reduce costs to travelling and hotel accommodation coupled with those that improve disposable income of prospective travellers, hence promoting domestic as well as international tourism once the borders are open.

The budget focused more on upkeeping tourists' hot spots and facilities, as well as skill- and placement-related assistance for employees in the industry - of which are important but recent reports portray concerns on its sufficiency.

The Malaysian Association of Hotels was highlighted in the news lately with their deep concerns with the lack of immediate assistance to stakeholders suffering from reduced cash flow due to both domestic and international travel restrictions while Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents emphasised on more could be done for the tourism industry employees broadly rather than just the aviation sector as well as the loan moratorium should be extended up to June 2021 for tourism businesses.

Finally, while we commend the government's strategies and proposed allocations to sustain the domestic economy in the immediate-term with proactive plans to fuel growth and regeneration, direct measures to improve the people's purchasing power and the consumer sentiment is paramount as there is heavy reliance on domestic consumption and expenditure to keep the economy running. 🎅



Sulaiman Saheh is the director of research for global real estate consultancy Rahim & Co International Sdn Bhd.