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## A grand slam of real estate awards

Serving as the creme-de-la-creme accolades to propel property developers forward



By JOSEPH WONG josephwong@thestar.com.my

UILDING an award that every property market stakeholder can value and trust is not an easy task. Even with the collaboration of two highly credible organisations with mutual goals to elevate the industry, the step forward took over nine months to formulate and finetune an accolade that would fill a gap in recognising reputable developers and their developments.

After nine months, local property wards pioneer International Real Estate Federation Malaysian Chapter (FIABCI-Malaysia) and Star Media Group (SMG) gave birth to the inaugural Malaysia Developer Awards (MDA).

The aim is to recognise the well deserved local property developers for their effort and hard work in building the nation. These awards aim at boosting developers to reach for higher innovation and greater performance, said FIABCI-Malaysia president Datuk Seri Koe Peng Kang.

"Those of us who have been in the industry for many years are aware that there is a gap that needs to be filled," he said, adding that there is a multitude of property awards in Malaysia's real estate landscape,

each vying to be the voice of authority and standard-bearer for the industry.

This creates confusion and lingering doubts, especially for consumers who are bombarded with conflicting information. However, with two reputable entities FIABCI-Malaysia and SMG acting as the stronghold, both parties can provide the much-needed clarity to real estate stakeholders.

The Malaysia Developer Awards are carefully crafted to provide credible and holistic benchmarking of the industry for property developers and consumers alike, he said.

This ensures that the MDA will become ne gauge for buyers and investors to make informed decisions when it comes to buying or investing in a property or believing that the developer will deliver the envisaged development as promised.

Beyond recognising the most welldeserving property players, the awards also set its sights on the long term development of the industry, added SMG group chief executive officer Alex Yeow.

"We hope that with the recognition of the best of the best, we will be able to promote healthy competition amongst the property players by inspiring them to push boundaries.

"The Malaysia Developer Awards' is only in its first year, but every single aspect of its blueprint and construction, from the

categories to the criteria, was given due attention. It is moulded to be an award that will be trusted by all - developers, investors and consumers alike, serving as the assurance they need to make informed decisions," he said.

In short, the awards will serve to validate that the companies they are dealing with are reputable and their developments are of sound quality.

This also means that property developers hoping to gain an MDA trophy would have to undergo stringent criteria to meet the standards mapped out.

#### **Designed to elevate standards**

It is also important to note that the birth of the MDA does not replace the two dominant awards in the property market under FIABCI-Malaysia and SMG, Malaysia Property Award<sup>™</sup> (MPA) and StarProperty Awards respectively. Instead, it is designed to strengthen and fill in the gaps where the MPA and StarProperty Awards do not cover

The MPA has the principal objectives of elevating the overall standards of the construction and building industry, raising the bar for quality real estate development whilst encouraging healthy competition among developers and builders in innovation, quality, sustainability and delivery, said Koe.

The project-oriented award, held annually for 30 years, was the first of its kind in Malaysia, and the winners have the option to further compete in the international level of FIABCI Prix d' Excellence Awards, held annually in Paris.

On the other hand, the StarProperty Awards are also project-oriented. The main difference is that the StarProperty Awards predominantly deal with on-going developments, whereas for the MPA, the participating project must be completed and occupied for at least one year.

In summary, with the creation of the new MDA, both FIABCI-Malaysia and SMG have now completed the grand slam of real estate awards, in recognition of deserving property developers through their exceptional performance and contribution to the nation as well as the projects that have propelled Malaysia onto the international platform.

It is essential to note that the three awards are fundamentally different in their entirety. The new award recognises property developers, whereas the MPA recognises completed development projects, while the StarProperty Awards acknowledges the ongoing projects.



#### Stringent judging criteria

The MDA categories and judging criteria are set to distinguish the new awards distinctively. Nevertheless, the judging process is as stringent as the MPA and StarProperty Awards.

The MDA divides the awarding of developers into two main categories, namely Top-of-the-Chart Awards and the Special Awards.

The Top-of-the-Chart Awards are divided into two tiers, namely listed companies with a market capitalisation of RM1bil and above and listed companies with a market capitalisation of less than RM1bil. This is to give recognition to the big boys as well as the up-and-coming property developers.

The Special Awards comprise three sub-categories - The International Awards, Transformation Awards, and The Rising Star Awards, which will be given to the Top three developers.

#### **Judges of distinction**

To ensure a fair and credible assessment of the participating property developers, about 15 judges from an array of property-linked industries, organisations and institutions have been invited to judge the entries. In addition, one of the Big Four accounting firms, KPMG is engaged to validate the financial figures and the process of evaluation.

Drawing on the experience of FIABCI-Malaysia, both participants and the public, in general, can rest assured that the evaluation process is on par with international standards.

"The MPA which has a history of 30 years in Malaysia is well-known for its stringent evaluation process, which makes the award something every developer yearn for.

"However, after awarding merits to excellent projects for 30 years, we believe it is time to recognise those nation builders, as they have been working hard to outperform their peers in crafting more innovative masterpieces. And this is made possible through MDA.

"Development projects are like an art piece, without the artists, never will we live to see such beautiful and astonishing projects, they should be appreciated too. Now it is time we embark on another new award while continuing our very own Malaysia Property Award<sup>TM</sup>," said Koe. \*

	Malaysia Property Award <sup>™</sup> (MPA)	Malaysia Developer Awards <sup>™</sup> (MDA)	StarProperty Awards
Organiser	FIABCI Malaysian Chapter	Joint collaboration – FIABCI Malaysian Chapter and The Star	StarProperty
History	Initiated since 1992	Launched on 21 February, 2022	Initiated since 2016
Targeted Participants	Predominantly completed and occupied development projects	Property developers only	Predominantly approved on-going development projects
Objective	Recognise the excellence in the development projects	Recognise property developers and create credible and holistic awards that consumers can trust	Give recognition to the projects and strengthen consumer confidence in the developer
Awards Categories	About 20 categories	"Two Main Categories: 1. Top-of-the-Chart Awards (Two tiers) 2. Special Awards (Three sub categories)"	Over 40 categories
Additional feature	Winners can represent Malaysia to participate in the FIABCI World Prix d'Excellence Awards	N/A	N/A

RIGHT
Koe (left) and Yeow at the
recent launch of the MDA.
- IZZRAFIQ ALIAS/The Star

## The importance of awards

There is no dispute that there are many property awards in Malaysia. These range from localised accolades to international ones. Deciding what awards to enter could be challenging but it is essential to weigh up the time and effort it would take to enter against the potential gains.

With resources often stretched, deciding on the award would depend on the company's goals and what it hopes to achieve by winning such a trophy. But putting the company forward for such awards should not always be the top of the agenda. Here are several reasons why simply entering an award could be beneficial to your company.

#### Benchmarking

Entering an honourable award like the Malaysia Property Award™ (MPA), Malaysia Developer Awards (MDA) or StarProperty Awards can often entice a property developer to look at its operations from a different perspective and compare itself to their competitors. To stand out from the competition, property developers need to be innovative, diverse, strategic and dynamic, among others. Competing in such awards would encourage companies to look inward to better themselves, which could be more valuable than winning the trophy itself.

#### **Increased credibility**

An award win, short-listing or nomination can act as a third party acknowledgement for the participating property developer. A win can give a seal of approval to the company or its projects and serves as a sign of quality for potential home buyers and investors. It can also help with relationships with suppliers and financial institutions. Furthermore, it is a great way to differentiate your company from competitors and send out positive signals to home buyers and investors.



#### **Good publicity**

Property awards can be an overlooked tool in marketing activities. A win with a reputable award can improve brand awareness and promote sales. The MPA, MDA or StarProperty Awards celebrate the property developer's hard work and success. The winners are undoubtedly published on many media venues, from print to social media platforms. Such a win could open doors to getting contracts, finding new supply channels and breaking into new

#### **Attract talent**

Property awards elevate a company's hiring stature among new recruits. By pitching the company as an award-winning one, you can attract the talent needed to push the company forward. At the same time, it can increase employee morale to be working for an award-winning developer. This also helps to ensure staff retention as employees are focused on what's great about their company and can feel proud to be a part of it.

But property developers should take note that the awards they are pursuing are reputable ones, not those seen as buyable. §



# Home is where the heart is at Tropicana Aman

Gemala Residences - designed for peace and harmony in mind



home will always be the place where one feels the deepest affection, no matter where they are. With this fundamental ideology in mind, Tropicana Corporation Bhd (Tropicana) is introducing a new landed property within their awardwinning Tropicana Aman township that will offer all the essence of a home with all the extra features to ensure a tranquil lifestyle.

Gemala Residences is where you find this outstanding balance in life, as its rich, lush greenery creates a tranquillity like no other. With only 116 units to be made available, the property's design reflects its green name, Garden Linked Villa, which is based on its easy accessibility to an abundance of nature.

Given its unique L-shape layout with a semi-detached facade design, this rewarding format offers residents the extra space to be surrounded by nature right at their doorsteps. The additional land can be creatively personalised by any green-thumb residents.

Ample sized window and sliding door openings are made to compliment the views of the surrounding natural landscape as well as ventilation and natural light penetration. The covered car porch area would be the cherry on top as it is enough to ensure that three cars could be parked inside.

Spanning across 15.5 acres with a gross development value (GDV) of RM165mil, Gemala Residences is crafted to be on par with Tropicana Aman's masterplan - a composition of peace and harmony, home is where the heart is.

Located next to Kota Kemuning in Shah Alam, Selangor, Gemala Residences is estimated to be welcoming residents by February 2025. Based on buyer's preference, the houses offer either lake views or park views. For lake view units, balconies are provided with full height sliding doors and windows for maximum aesthetic feel.

With a built-up of 2,648 sq ft to 2,860 sq ft, houses at Gemala Residences will have 5+1 bedrooms with 4+1 bathrooms. Each unit offers an open plan concept between the living and dining spaces which gives residents more flexibility with furniture layouts as well as interior design works. In addition, growing families get to personalise the space to match their wants and needs. At a price ranging between RM1,283,800 and RM1,712,800, there is no doubt these homes offer value for money.

With 85 acres of central park, this gated-and-guarded community will be monitored around the clock, creating safe walking and biking zones for residents. On top of the added security, boundaries are surrounded by anti-climb fencing with CCTVs for peace of mind.

With convenience in mind, this neighbourhood is designed to easily transition from the guardhouse to the individual streets with generous road size for easy turning. A community hall will

be located adjacent to the guardhouse, giving a warm welcome when one enters the residence.

#### T Living by Tropicana

Tropicana continues to offer their T living personalisation programme for all Gemala Residences buyers. To enhance the buyer's experience, purchasers get to put on their creative hat and be their very own interior designer by choosing their preferred look and taking a feel of the key areas in their possible new home.

Buyers get to select their preferred layout and choose a colour theme of their choice. From the colour palette to selected fittings for every Gemala Residences unit, the experience of the new spectrum of living will be less of a hassle while open to more choices.

#### **Facilities abound**

Presiding in Selangor, this strategic area gives an added bonus to residents. There are various facilities nearby including the Tropicana Aman Recreational Hub, which is located within the township. Those with a sense of adventure will be thrilled that Bukit Kemuning Golf and Country Resort as well as Kota Permai Golf and Country Club are only a short drive away. Convenience stores are also riddled around the Gemala Residences neighbourhood.

Growing families will not have a shortage of educational institutions to choose from as schools such as SJK (C)

#### ABOVE

**BELOW** 

of the main

An artist impression

An artist impression of Gemala Residences.

parents to keep their options open.

Medical facilities such as Columbia
Asia Hospital and KPJ Shah Alam
cater to residents' health and welfare
needs. When the nation is fully open

Bukit Fraser, Tenby International School

and Kindyland Kindergarten are nearby.

MIT Academy Kota Kemuning and other

international schools are also nearby for

cater to residents' health and welfare needs. When the nation is fully open to international travel again, the Kuala Lumpur International Airport and Subang Airport are just a short drive away.

In terms of connectivity, Tropicana

In terms of connectivity, Tropicana Aman is easily accessible to six major highways, allowing easy access to other facilities around the area. These include Shah Alam Expressway (KESAS), Federal Highway, Kemuning Shah Alam Highway (LKSA), North–South Expressway Central Link (Elite), South Klang Valley Expressway (SKVE) and West Coast Expressway (WCE).

#### Residences.

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## GEMALA RESIDENCES

## IN PERFECT

HARMONY

Gemala Residences is the newest collection of low density 32' x 75' garden linked villas within Tropicana Aman that open out towards lake and garden views, crafted in holistic balance with nature.

It's where everything comes together for perfect harmony.

**NOW OPEN FOR SALE** 





Open plan concept for flexibility



A side garden for every unit brings nature closer



A modern and timeless facade



Gated and guarded living with 24-hour perimeter security



Direct access to the Central Park



Choose between Lake or Park views for your home



Artist's impression only

Balconies face out towards the lake



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## Rekindling interest in property investment in today's environment

The opportunities are there but so are the challenges

Contributed by SULAIMAN SAHEH

S the world and Malaysia adapt to the pandemic environment and new norms, interests in the market are gradually returning, with potential buyers beginning to scout for worthy investment opportunities. More so with the economy and property market just coming out of the pandemic slump period.

And as one of the traditional forms of investment, real estate continues to hold its position as a steady, long-term commitment investment choice. But with the market conditions being on the more passive side and still in its recovering phase, there are several factors to consider before signing that deal and risk tying yourself to a real estate investment that could cause more expenses than bringing in profitable income especially in the immediate term.

Being a large-sized asset that would require a significant amount of funds to purchase, it takes patience and knowledge with a touch of luck to bear the biggest fruit.

While stories of lucrative success and self-made millionaires might inspire you to dive right into the property investment world, take a step back from the diving board and make a thorough assessment on how prepared you are in making such an investment.

Unlike investing in the stock market and shares, property investment is not as liquid and takes longer to convert into cash. But at the same time, stock investment has higher volatility that results in a chance for quick, profitable returns on those few spot-on choices (and losses for the unfortunate ones), whereas property investment is a longer-term commitment.



Property remains as a good hedge against inflation.

### Hedge against inflation

As a good hedge against inflation, capital growth in real estate is steadier with a lesser degree of volatility. However, there are instances of capital value depreciation as seen in certain segments in the market over the past few years.

Getting into the real estate arena would require your ability to fork out a significant sum of money to purchase the property you are investing in – be



it through outright purchase with cash or a downpayment when taking on a mortgage loan.

This first crucial step is to evaluate your capability in serving a loan whilst maintaining your current lifestyle. Plan out how your investment journey would be and be realistic with your financial status and how the market is. Optimism has its place, but always be prepared for the worst and have some reserves for potential rainy days.

In a similar vein, investors are looking to buy their dream property investment. It can be a home, a shop lot or a warehouse. It can be a landed house, an apartment or a plot of land.

Or, it can be in the city centre, a suburban area or outskirt areas. Each type of property and its immediate surroundings has its own characteristics, potential buyers, renters, and target market. Landed homes are generally more expensive than high-rise units.

But with the right combination of location, property type, concept and price, the profit potential can be much higher, especially in established urban areas where land is already scarce. Of course, there are also opportunities for high-rise units, especially those equipped with facilities and conveniences designed to the likings of today's buyers or renters.

Do not limit yourself to just residential properties as commercial properties have their benefits. Despite discussions revolving around physical presence being less relevant in the face of online shopping, humans are still social animals.

This was proven when locals flocked to shopping malls and social hotspots after being cooped up at home for months. No matter how tech-savvy things may have become, the need

for physical interaction and instant gratification remains.

But this does not mean that there will not be changes to how shops and retail malls will look like in the future. As e-commerce and online shopping make their own wave, physical spaces will see a shift in demand for them to be more experiential and aesthetically pleasing for that perfect Instagram photo.

#### **Accelerated growth**

Despite the accelerated growth of online shopping over the past two years, the demand for physical stores remains strong. Ironically, online-exclusive retailers have been seen to expand their presence into physical stores to create physical interactions with their online customers. Benefitting from this are the warehouses as part of the logistics sector, which continue to hold the spotlight as a stable investment choice. This makes them one of the hot sectors to invest in while the property market is still finding itself back on the recovery track.

Choosing the best investment property is not all about which is the most profitable but rather the sustainable choice. While expectations on potential profits are aimed high, one must also consider how sustainable such profit levels can be in the long run. Sustainability refers to knowing how durable and resistant the property investment is against the test of time and changing demands.

This is done by equipping yourself with as much accurate and up-to-date information there is on your intended property choice. It is not just about learning the potential of the property itself but also its market potential.

#### ABOVE

If you know where to look, there are always potential property investment opportunities. A property market has its cycle, and knowing where you are and where you are heading may just save you from falling into a speculation trap or earning zero rental income in a lagging market.

Sustainability also refers to your capability of sustaining such investment without burning yourself out down the road. To maintain an investment property, owners need to maintain a certain level of quality and management efficiency to preserve and enhance its value.

During the current Covid-19 pandemic and economic challenges, there are hidden gems of opportunity and bargain deals to be snatched, but only if you are using the right reading glasses.

#### **Quick cash**

As there could be property owners looking to quickly cash out their assets in this financially challenging time, bargain hunters are always looking for the right property to be bought. Do not keep looking for properties sold by developers. Existing properties in the secondary market can also present good investment options.

Do not limit your choices and do your research. Be prepared financially. Have a chat with your preferred banker to discuss how much financing you can obtain whilst keeping your own financial situation safe. It will allow you to have a firmer budget and confidence when you scout around for your ideal investment property.

Of course, opportunities during a crisis are more applicable to investors who have already armed themselves with sufficient funds to select and seal the deal. In a situation where financial belts are already tightened significantly due to job insecurities and uncertain economic outlook, the worst thing one may commit is tying themselves to a financial commitment that is too heavy.

But it is never too late as you can still prepare yourself for the next investment opportunity even in times of crisis. Plan out your saving steps and be consistent in the practice while constantly keeping your investment goal in mind to be on track. Take the time to identify what form of investment is best for you and equip yourself with enough real estate knowledge to prevent you from making a blind jump. §



to prepare for the next investment opportunity.



# Chinese buyers' demand for Malaysian properties has changed

Education may be the key for the nation to make a big win

By **JOSEPH WONG** 

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HE Chinese buyers' demand for Malaysian homes has fallen sharply, especially over the Covid-19 pandemic period in the last two years. It currently stands at about one-third of the level it was before the pandemic, but there is a silver lining.

The demand is expected to climb back up in 2022, according to Juwai IQI Group co-founder and chief executive officer Kashif Ansari.

"The drop has been due to the reduction in travel between the two countries. After Malaysia reopens its borders sometime in the second quarter of the year, travel will remain limited by China's zero-Covid policy.

"Chinese who want to travel to Malaysia have to undergo an extended quarantine upon returning home. As a result, most Chinese have avoided overseas travel," he said.

All this is poised to change but it hinges on Malaysia's ability to attract students from China, who had initially intended to seek out English-speaking countries like the United States of America or Australia.

"We believe that in 2022 to 2025, Malaysia has the opportunity to attract international students in K-12, university, post-graduate, and English-language programs which might otherwise have gone to the US or Australia.

"The number of Chinese students in the US is down by 20%, due to political tensions, fears for safety, and difficulties obtaining visas. The number of Chinese students in Australia is down even further," said Ansari.

"In 2019, there were more than 32,000 international students enrolled

in Malaysian educational institutions, accounting for about 6% of total student numbers. We believe that in 2022 the number of international students has been reduced by at least 30% and that the level will begin climbing again this year, before returning to the prepandemic level by 2025," he said.

Even though China's borders remain closed at this time, Ansari believed that 2022 would see Chinese buying of Malaysian property begin to climb again.

"Psychologically, people are moving beyond the pandemic. When China's borders reopen to free travel, the rebound in Chinese property acquisition will gain pace as visits climb," he said.

The Malaysian home market remains appealing to Chinese buyers due to the high quality of life on offer, its proximity to China, and relatively low prices. Some buyers will be seeking bargains and hoping to buy unsold new units from developers at a discounted price.

Another factor motivating Chinese investors is the market in China, which is lacklustre at the moment. Restrictions on investing and the development industry have some Chinese buyers looking overseas for alternatives.

#### **Foreign investors**

According to the Q3 2021 Juwai IQI Property Survey and Index, in the first half of 2021, foreign buyers account for 13% of new home purchases. Foreign buyers accounted for the largest share of new home buying in Sarawak at 15% and Kuala Lumpur and Selangor at 13%.

The National Property Information Centre reported that RM18bil of residential property sold in the third quarter. "Foreign buyers accounted for 10% to 15% of new and second-hand



transactions in Malaysia's largest cities. Working on the back of an envelope, you can estimate that foreign buyers purchase in the range of RM1.8 billion of real estate per quarter, or RM7.2 billion per year.

"If they are buying for their own use, Chinese buyers choose to purchase where they intend to live or use the home. If they're buying for investment, they seek good yields, easy maintenance, and likely capital gains," said Ansari.

## **Anticipation for the 30th NREC mounting**

Excitement for the 30th National Real Estate Conference (NREC) is ramping up as the one-day event rolls nearer. Featuring topics like Property Myths vs Reality, Repurposing Urban Spaces and ESG in Real Estate, the hybrid conference will be held at Royal Chulan Kuala Lumpur on March 10.

Four sessions have been planned. The first three sessions are presentations followed by a panel of discussion with audience participation while the final session is a forum on debunking the myths relating to specific property-related issues. Further information is obtainable at <a href="https://ps.rism.org.my/">https://ps.rism.org.my/</a>. \*

## StarProperty teams up with Batman at KL East Mall



HIS weekend, Batman fans will not just be able to enjoy The Batman movie, but they can also grab several of the Caped Crusader's limited-edition merchandise at the StarProperty Fair at KL East Mall In conjunction with the start of the movie and the StarProperty Fair, fans will be given a chance to win the Batman paraphernalia, courtesy of Warner Bros Malaysia.

To qualify for the merchandise, all homebuyers and visitors need to do is to complete a simple survey. The merchandise is limited, so be early to avoid disappointment. It is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Home buyers and visitors to the StarProperty Fair might just find their own Bat Cave in the form of their dream home. The event will be held from March 4 to 6 at level G1 from 10 am to 10 pm. Among the exhibitors are reputable developers like Mah Sing Group Bhd and Sime Darby Property Bhd. Among the properties by Mah Sing include M Adora, M Arisa and M Luna.

As much as the riddler loves his riddles, StarProperty is the best way to find a home you will love. The Buy-and-Win

promotion will be amped up to match Batman's crusade to bring justice to his city and build the excitement. The movie is now in cinemas. In addition to the survey, new home buyers will have the added opportunity to enter another lucky draw with thousands of ringgit worth of home appliances if they purchase a unit during the fair.

From April to November, StarProperty has planned for several more property fairs to be held at IOI Mall Puchong, IOI City Mall, Central I-City, Sunway Pyramid, Sunway Velocity, IOI Mall Puchong and Midvalley Exhibition Centre respectively.

This year's series of property fairs will host different themes to cater to the many preferences of purchasers. Various activities have been planned alongside the multitude of property displays by the participating exhibitors.

To ensure the safety of visitors, buyers and exhibitors, StarProperty will strictly adhere to the standard operating procedures. For more updates and exciting news for upcoming events, follow the StarProperty Facebook page as more activities draw closer this year. ?

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## SUBMISSION OF ENTRIES IS NOW OPEN!



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Closing date is

