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MINISTER OF WORKS, MALAYSIA
LAUNCH OF THE GREEN BUILDING INDEX
21 MAY 2009
KUALA LUMPUR CONVENTION CENTRE MALAYSIA

1. I wish to thank Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM) and the Association of Consulting Engineers (ACEM) for inviting me to launch the Green Building Index today. I am honoured to be here on this significant day to mark another milestone for Malaysia.

2. The Green Building Index or GBI is an important green rating tool to assist all those involved in the property and construction sector to become more environment-friendly. Although there are already many green rating tools developed like the LEED, BREEAM, CASBEE, Green Star etc, the GBI is created and customized for the Malaysian culture and climate.

3. As such it is truly Malaysian, whilst at the same time benchmarked against internationally recognized best practices and standards. In addition, it is also one of the first green rating tools developed by professionals for the tropical climate and this has attracted a lot of international interest.

4. I am told that the current green building trend is very much driven by property developers who want something different to add a marketing edge to their new projects. Reports show that the primary

reasons developers are asking for green buildings are because of the potential for reduced operating costs which is by about 60 per cent.

5. However the reality and effects of global warming and carbon emissions on climate change is clear for all to see. It can no longer be ignored. So I hope that this current drive to be more “green” is more than just a marketing trend, but more so a wake-up call for all to take the necessary action and decisions to change the way we live to ensure a better tomorrow.

6. Home and building owners are now more knowledgeable and have the means to make choices. In Malaysia, our level of awareness towards it is gradually increasing and I believe more Malaysians will choose options towards a healthier and more cost effective lifestyle. Owners of existing buildings will then have to face the challenge to turn their properties into green buildings.

7. From man’s earliest days, he has been a builder. Buildings, cities and the built environment are the products of human civilization. Buildings last a long time, often more than 30 years. They use a lot of energy and emit a lot of carbon during that life cycle. According to the World Building Council, the building sector consumes as much as 40 per cent of the world’s energy, 12 per cent of its water and contributes 40 per cent of the waste sent to landfill. Thus buildings can be said to have a very large carbon footprint.

8. However, Malaysia as a developing nation cannot stop building and growing. We just have to start building better and greener to ensure a more sustainable future. Studies show that existing buildings in Malaysia use an average of 250 to 350 kilo-Watt-hour per square metre per year while green buildings under the GBI will be designed to operate with less than 200 kilo-Watt-hour per square metre per year.

9. Currently a lot of the electrical energy is used to air-condition and cool buildings. The GBI rating will require all buildings and homes to have proper insulation in the roof and also walls to keep the heat from the sun out. By keeping most of the solar heat out, less energy will need to be consumed for cooling.

10. Malaysia is blessed with an abundance of sunlight and rain. Sunlight can be harnessed as solar energy while rainwater and wastewater from sources such as dishwashing or washing machines, can be recycled and used for watering plants, flush toilets and wash cars. Effective window placement can provide more natural light and lessen the dependence on electrical lighting during the day. Solar water heating also further reduces energy loads for those who want to enjoy a hot bath.

11. Preserving the forests, green lungs and greenery will help keep temperatures lower. Using plants and trees for shading along roads, parking bays and housing areas will greatly reduce the surrounding ambient temperatures.

12. Proper and strategic planting can also help alleviate the “heat island” effect that most cities suffer from as a result of the large areas of tarred roads and concrete. Roof gardens and green walls should also be encouraged to further reduce these hot surfaces.

13. If we can bring the ambient temperature in the city down by 3 degrees more people might choose to walk, cycle and use public transport rather than drive the car. This may help address the problem of carbon emissions from the large numbers of cars in the city. It is interesting to see that the GBI rating puts emphasis on the need to promote other forms of transportation and connectivity other than the carbon fueled automobile.

14. It recognises that the use of the car for all means of connectivity and transport is singularly responsible for the largest portion of pollution and carbon emissions related to any building and especially the home. This is why the GBI rating requires new housing areas to plan and design for alternative means of transportation.

15. All these may sound very practical and common sense. However, it is essential to have a tool such as the Green Building Index that provides a systematic check-list for all who want to design, build or buy a building. The rating will then act like the report card for the building to confirm the level of sustainability that has been designed and built into it.

16. I am very pleased to also learn that the GBI will conduct a final rating check after the completion of the building to make sure that what was designed and promised was actually delivered. I am also glad to hear that the rating will be reviewed every three years to ensure that the building is well maintained and operated in accordance to the way that it was designed. This will help create a new maintenance mentality for Malaysia and also keep our valuable assets in good working order.

17. When we buy a car, it comes with a performance rating, a maintenance manual and we make sure that it is regularly serviced to ensure that it is always in tip-top condition. Why should it be any different with buildings that are even more expensive and have a longer lifecycle.18. I am very encouraged that all the stakeholders in the property and construction industry have pledged their support to this initiative. I trust that this support will help take this industry to new levels. I am also very pleased that the professional Architects and Engineers from PAM and ACEM have volunteered their time, resources and talents to create this tropical green rating tool that I am sure will have a great impact to the region and the world.

19. The Government is very serious about our efforts to create a green and sustainable environment. Our Prime Minister has formed a new Ministry to look into reviewing and formulating policies on green technology in order to enhance the quality of life and to ensure a better future for all Malaysians. I urge all the industry players to work with the Government to achieve this aspiration.

20. Lastly, I wish to congratulate PAM & ACEM again for this huge effort in developing the Green Building Index. I am proud that the building Professionals have taken the initiative to pioneer this important tool. I am also encouraged to know that the GBI has the full support of all the players in the property, construction and housing industry. This goes to show that the Malaysian development and construction industry is ready to confront important critical issues such as global warming, carbon emissions and climate change.

21. Today we can look forward to the beginning of a new era where Malaysians can choose to live and work in green rated buildings and homes. These will provide energy and water savings, a healthier indoor environment, better connectivity with alternative transport modes and the adoption of recycling and more greenery in their communities.

22. The successful implementation of GBI coupled with the people's will to change the way we have been living will help ensure a better future for all Malaysians. Syabas PAM and ACEM! With this note, I am pleased to launch the Green Building Index Malaysia.

Terima kasih.