

Malaysia stands tall and proud

Malaysia's real estate projects have reached the height of excellence, made evident when Malaysia proudly swept six awards, comprising three gold and three silver, at the Fiaci World Prix d'Excellence Awards held in Kuala Lumpur recently



Ir. Yeow Thit Sang at his office in Mont' Kiara



“This is the first time Malaysia has won this many awards,” says a delighted Ir. Yeow Thit Sang, president of the Fiaci World Prix d'Excellence Awards Committee 2015.

He says the awards are presented in recognition of the real estate developments that help to make the world a better place to live and work.

Yeow adds that Malaysia's achievement is testament that our homegrown developers have been paying attention to the needs of the purchasers and are able to deliver the goods.

VERVE Suites at Mont' Kiara, the World Gold winner under the residential and high-rise category, is a fine example of a developer taking the lead in introducing something new and innovative to its purchasers.

“The developer made it a point to reserve the top two floors for leisure and entertainment with a man-made beach, swimming pool with sunbathing lounges to boot, and ultra-large bean bags for the sole enjoyment of residents of the entire development. They have opened up both floors to all the residents so that is something worthwhile,” commends Yeow.

The other World Gold winners from Malaysia were Aloft Kuala Lumpur Sentral (hotel category) and Lost World of Tambun (resort category) in Perak.

Also from Malaysia, the World Silver winners included The Light Waterfront (master plan category) in Penang, Menara OBYU (Point 92) (office category) in Selangor and Casaman Parkhomes, Desa ParkCity (residential (low-rise category) in Kuala Lumpur.

Countries that took home awards during the gala night were Singapore, China, the US, Hungary, Indonesia, Taiwan, Germany and Australia.



Since its inception in 1992, the Fiabci World Prix d'Excellence Awards, an international level awards competition that welcomes the participation of countries from around the world, have been bestowing awards to real estate projects that fulfill a certain standard of excellence.

Championing sustainability

One such standard touches on the concept of sustainability. "We took into consideration the concept of sustainability more than 20 years ago, before sustainability became a hot topic of discussion. We must realise that sustainability is becoming important to the world because of global warming. Every little effort by anyone will go a long way to help alleviate the carbon footprint in the world," says Yeow.

The focus on sustainability reflects the industry's sense of urgency in preserving our environment. Conventional buildings are steadily being replaced by green or sustainable ones, whether residential or non-residential. These are structures that respect the environment at the various stages of its existence — be it design, construction, operation, maintenance, renovation and demolition.

According to Yeow, holding international competitions such as the World Prix d'Excellence is one of Fiabci's initiatives to encourage future developers to pay close attention to the issue of building sustainably. "The fact that we allocate 25 marks to sustainability in every category is to make sure that developers realise its importance, and they should do their part to reduce the energy usage in buildings as much as possible. Developers are beginning to take note of this when they enter our awards," he reveals.

"So it is inclusive of almost everything in the project's life span — starting from the owner's ambition and vision

to how the architect conceives the design of a building based on the vision of the owner. And then we go into the construction, the method, materials that go into it and also its management process. And then, we also look into the operations and maintenance aspects, and whether there is any benefit to the community as well.

"As an example, we have upgraded Mont' Kiara from its rural status to what it is today through local job creation, thereby enhancing the area's overall value," he says.

When it comes to the criteria for judging, Fiabci has put in place a very comprehensive questionnaire for participants to provide answers on their projects. "There is this whole set of criteria, with each one having a different set of marking schemes. In effect, it takes the judges a whole month to go through the entire questionnaire."

To demonstrate a commitment to transparency in Fiabci's judging practices, Yeow shares that it has also put in a strict rule that no judges are allowed to judge a category or project from their respective country of origin.

Yeow adds that there were some returning judges from the previous year. They were Antonia Bogomilova Wirth from Bulgaria, a past president of Fiabci Bulgaria and member of Fiabci's International Board. Bogomilova has been an international real estate consultant for two decades. There was also Judy Shenefield from the Americas, a former Fiabci world president and past president of Fiabci US, who has over 18 years' experience in the real estate industry. Another judge was Robyn Waters, who is the current Fiabci World President.

Yeow says there were 85 project entries received by Fiabci this year. "That's more than last year and we hope that the number will continue to increase. Then it would be more meaningful," he says. — **By Angeline Foo**

JUDGING CRITERIA

FOR ALL CATEGORIES:

(Except Environmental (Rehabilitation/Conservation) Category, Heritage (Restoration/Conservation) Category, Master Plan Category and Sustainable Development Category)

- ▶ General Description of Project
- ▶ Architecture and Design
- ▶ Development and Construction
- ▶ Financial and Marketing
- ▶ Environmental Impact
- ▶ Community Benefits

For Environmental (Rehabilitation/Conservation) Category:

- ▶ General Description of Project
- ▶ Planning and Design
- ▶ Implementation
- ▶ Result and Environmental Impact
- ▶ Financial and Benefits to Community

For Heritage (Restoration/Conservation) Category:

- ▶ General Description of Project
- ▶ Architecture Impact and Design
- ▶ Implementation Stage
- ▶ Financial and Marketing
- ▶ Community Benefits and Environmental Impact

For Master Plan Category:

- ▶ General Description of Project
- ▶ Preparatory Phase of Project
- ▶ Financial Considerations
- ▶ Authorities Approval
- ▶ Implementation
- ▶ Environmental Impact
- ▶ Community Benefits

For Sustainable

Development Category:

- ▶ General Description of Project
- ▶ Architecture and Design
- ▶ Development and Construction
- ▶ Financial and Marketing
- ▶ Environmental Impact

THE 3-STEP JUDGING PROCESS

- 1 Submission of winners from country awards (and nominations with approval for countries with no own country awards)
- 2 Judging process — conducted by 68 judges from 28 countries
- 3 Winners' confirmation by members of oversight panel. A physical meeting was held in Barcelona in March to confirm the winners.

THE WINNERS' SELECTION CRITERIA

- ▶ Highest scores and over 75% will be declared World Gold winner
- ▶ Second highest scores and over 75% will be named World Silver winner.