



09 AUG, 2019

INDUSTRY MAVERICKS

Malaysia Tatler, Malaysia





09 AUG, 2019

INDUSTRY MAVERICKS

Malaysia Tatler, Malaysia



CHIEF INSTIGATORS
Sarena Cheah, Datuk Lai Voon Hon, Bryan Loo, Datuk Ruben Gnanalingam and David Mizan Hashim are each a force to be reckoned with, in their respective industries



09 AUG, 2019

INDUSTRY MAVERICKS

Malaysia Tatler, Malaysia





09 AUG, 2019

INDUSTRY MAVERICKS

Malaysia Tatler, Malaysia

Page 4 of 14

DATUK LAI VOON HON

Group managing director of Ireka Corporation

Tatler's Most Promising 2004

While the photo shoot takes place in front of The RuMa Hotel's now iconic double stairway, Datuk Lai Voon Hon, dapper in a cool, blue Paul Smith suit, looked at ease in front of the camera. He doesn't seem overly concerned about the guests' movements as they gingerly stepped through our set, heading in and out of the hotel. Why? Because there were some guest relations officers on standby, ever ready to assist the guests. It is little experiential touches like this that make people feel at home in this hotel, and gives rise to why it has been rated highly on TripAdvisor, despite having just opened end last year.

"I am happily surprised by the speed we have achieved the #1 spot in less than five months since the soft opening," says Datuk Lai. "To this I must thank the staff and management of the hotel who have embraced the concept of 'Hostmanship' wholeheartedly and with full conviction." His goal with The RuMa was to create a uniquely Malaysian hotel with not only local design characteristics but also our renowned, charming hospitality, and he is happy to report that his expectations have been met.

The man who was once recognised as Tatler's Most Promising in 2004 begun his venture into the hospitality industry by opening the Westin Kuala Lumpur that same year, to much acclaim and accolades. "I vouched there and then that the award would further inspire me to introduce more innovative products to Malaysia's hospitality scene," he shared. Since then, Ireka has proceeded to develop three trend-setting hotels—the hip and trendy Aloft KL Sentral, a first of its kind; the contemporary Four Points by Sheraton Sandakan Hotel with its ballroom and swimming pool overlooking the Sulu Sea, and the latest bespoke luxury hotel, The RuMa Hotel and Residences.

With environmental sustainability uppermost on his mind, he ensures that Ireka's projects are benchmarked to Green Building Index standards. He also wishes to address the

alarming food wastage issue that's prevalent in society today. The company fully supports AIESEC UM's 'Clean Our Plate' initiative, a project that aims to enlighten the public's mindset of excess food, in order to be part of the movement that creates a world with zero food waste.

The architect in him feels that there should be more emphasis in the restoration and rehabilitation of old buildings and communities in Malaysia. He thinks that architects, developers and local authorities can do much more to promote sustainability within our cities by re-adapting, reusing and rehabilitating our existing built environment rather than constantly demolishing and rebuilding new ones.

In his mind's eye, Ireka will continue to do its part by placing great emphasis on sustainability in all their design, development and construction activities. In the mid and longer term, it will also actively promote a new business direction of providing urban transportation solutions to cities, towns and urban communities using green technology. "We hope that by promoting better connectivity and the use of public transportation, we can help contribute to improving the overall sustainability of our environment through lowering the use of fossil fuels and reducing our carbon footprint," says Datuk Lai.

"Life is full of failures and successes, this is how we can learn and grow. To ensure we continue to achieve success, we need to have big dreams in life so that we can continue to strive to achieve our dreams despite set-backs and obstacles"



09 AUG, 2019
INDUSTRY MAVERICKS

Malaysia Tatler, Malaysia



COOL IN BLUE
Recognisable in his trademark round glasses, Datuk Lai Voon Hon dons a tie, long-sleeved shirt, jacket and pants by Paul Smith



09 AUG, 2019
INDUSTRY MAVERICKS

Malaysia Tatler, Malaysia



PORT STOP
Datuk Ruben Gnanalingam, wearing a Jaeger-LeCoultre Geophysic Universal Time watch on his wrist, gives us an overview of the bustling Westports



09 AUG, 2019

INDUSTRY MAVERICKS

Malaysia Tatler, Malaysia

Page 7 of 14



“Port equipment is fairly similar across the world. What differentiates Westports from others are our work culture and values, which emphasise on meritocracy, provide recognition and also financial rewards for excellent work performance.”

DATUK RUBEN GNANALINGAM

Group managing director of Westports Malaysia

Entrepreneur Par Excellence 2012

One of the first things we see when we parked our car at Westports Malaysia is the waterfall feature situated outside their office building. When I commented on it to Datuk Ruben Gnanalingam, he says the idea came from his dad, Tan Sri G Gnanalingam, who wishes to make staff feel at home and comfortable at work. At Westports, culture is everything, and it's driven by three main themes: family, merit and innovation. “We treat and want everyone here to feel like part of a family. Merit means everyone is rewarded accordingly, based on their output, and innovation means we are constantly looking to evolve.

“These go very much hand-in-hand with my own philosophy as I believe people should treat others the way they want to be treated, which is fairly, in order to be able to adapt and change to the needs of the organisation plus be given an opportunity to learn from their mistakes. These have definitely helped Westports and I achieve our goals to date,” shares Datuk Ruben.

He adds that they provide support and encouragement through continuous engagement with their workforce. Ample training is provided to ensure constant upgrading of skill sets to expand the boundaries of performance gradually.

As one of the mega transshipment hubs and container terminals in Southeast Asia, Westports has not only positioned itself as the pit stop for container vessels, along the Straits of Malacca, but is also ranked high in the area of productivity. Operations-wise they have a triple-bottom-line approach to sustainability. The company recently published its third

Sustainability Report in March, which was audited externally by Sirim. Key highlights from the 58-page report include achieving record profits before tax of RM701 million in 2018 by moving 9.5 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units)—a record achievement for the company. At the social dimension, Westports provided a total 512,586 training hours to all their employees and over the past three years, they have spent a total of RM8.5 million on community building and CSR-related contributions. As the biggest employer in Pulau Indah, Klang, 41 per cent of their 4,600 staff stay on the island itself.

“We don't only believe in the sustainability of the company but also sustainability in the community,” asserts Datuk Ruben. “So far we have managed to massively reduce poverty, reduce crime and also planted over 1,000 mangrove trees on Pulau Indah.”

Environmental sustainability even comes in the form of investing in energy efficient machinery, such as variable speed and hybrid RTGs which reduced fuel consumption by 33 per cent and 53 per cent respectively. Over the years, Westports has been tracking its carbon emissions, and have a long-term commitment to reduce its carbon emission intensity in the near future.

The company may be celebrating its 25th anniversary milestone, but it has ambitious plans for growth and expansion for the next 25. Datuk Ruben reveals, “My aspiration is that within a few years, the blueprint for doubling Westports' handling capacity would be in place, which would provide the scope for continuous, organic growth.”



09 AUG, 2019

INDUSTRY MAVERICKS

Malaysia Tatler, Malaysia

Page 8 of 14

BRYAN LOO

CEO of Loob Holding

Entrepreneur Par Excellence 2015

Ultimately, it's all about thinking outside the box. That's what inspired Bryan Loo to give tea-drinking new meaning and a fresh outlook, because in Bryan's world, tea is life.

Bryan, the CEO of Loob Holding and the recipient of Tatler's Entrepreneur Par Excellence award in 2015, is the mastermind behind Tealive. As such, he has created lasting impressions and joyful experiences for all Tealive customers by pioneering the bubble tea culture nine years ago.

As more aspiring entrepreneurs join the food and beverage industry every day, Bryan acknowledges that perseverance and hard-work are keys needed to stay on top in the league. Crediting his family and fellow Loobies for the company's success, he continuously instils the value of 'Looking Out Of the Box'—which is where he derived the acronym Loob from.

"Times are changing and we just have to learn fast and do things even quicker," he explains. "Sure, there were mistakes along the way, but each one came with a lesson that made us stronger. I'm honoured that my journey has inspired many budding entrepreneurs to kick-start their own ventures, but it also keeps us on our toes."

In pursuit of going beyond expectations, Bryan and his team are practising sustainable leadership to heighten positive societal impact, while drifting away from the idea of simply providing thirst quenching beverages. To him, sustainability encompasses the values of passion, entrepreneurship, teamwork and honesty in everyday work, and it is also part and parcel of the values upheld at Loob. And believe it or not, Bryan found resonance with sustainability through fatherhood.

“I believe if we stay true to ourselves and continue building on our strengths, we are only going to grow stronger and better as a unit.”

"Before my children were born, I used to think only about creating and selling my businesses for profit, and not about building a brand," he recalls. "Now, my views on sustainability have changed; it means leaving a legacy, and as a father, it has taught me to create something for the next generation."

"If we stay true to ourselves and continue building on our strengths, we will get better as a unit. At Loob, our objective is to reinvent mundane human experiences into impactful moments. Our approach to customer engagement and environmental practices are only the tip of the iceberg, we also emphasise that every effort has to come from the heart."

While no idea is ever too crazy for Bryan, his vision of building a sustainable business for the future is to make Tealive the very first public listed bubble tea brand in Southeast Asia. Following his life's motto to a tee, "think big, start small, scale fast," with its all-authentic Malaysian flavours, we eagerly anticipate the rapid expansion of Tealive within and outside Malaysia.

"The lack of understanding in franchising objectives hinders sustainable businesses, and most franchising models offer short-term gains. Authorities should take more proactive approaches in franchising businesses and educate industry players on the importance of sustainability in this aspect. Think about all the possibilities of introducing completely new offerings to society, or turning something existing or familiar into something new and exciting. The possibilities are endless."

And thanks in part to Bryan's efforts they're also one of the many teams contributing to a thriving, healthy economy.



09 AUG, 2019
INDUSTRY MAVERICKS

Malaysia Tatler, Malaysia



TIME IT LIKE IT IS
Like most other exceptional leaders, Bryan Loo makes efficient use of his time. Here he dons a Jaeger-LeCoultre Duomètre Quantième Lunaire timepiece



09 AUG, 2019
INDUSTRY MAVERICKS

Malaysia Tatler, Malaysia





09 AUG, 2019

INDUSTRY MAVERICKS

Malaysia Tatler, Malaysia

Page 11 of 14

SARENA CHEAH

Managing director of the Property Development Division of Sunway Berhad

Most Promising Young Woman 2009

Caring for the wellbeing and progression of communities has always been at the heart of Sunway Berhad. With the recent advances in technology, one of Malaysia's largest conglomerates gets a thumbs up in contributing sustainability efforts to the country's real estate, construction, education, healthcare, retail and hospitality sectors.

Sarena Cheah, the managing director of the Property Development Division at Sunway Berhad, was also the recipient of Tatler's Most Promising Young Woman Award in 2009. She is the driving force behind the company's provision and operations, and since joining the company in 2010, she has been nothing short of dynamic. Determined to push the boundaries of the property development industry, Sarena is ready to charter Sunway Berhad towards sustainable development.

As a leader, Sarena is conscious of the example she sets for her team. She implements the practice of sustainability in her leadership by ensuring her colleagues are consistently aware of her decisions. "Team Sunway is driven to deliver long-term growth for the community, and for us to sustain into the future, we address affordability issues to match the country's progress," shared Sarena. "As a master community developer, we believe in helping people, and we use our philosophy and values to carry us through adverse times."

Inspired by her father, Tan Sri Dr Jeffrey Cheah, and his efforts on turning wastelands into thriving townships, Sarena finds passion in building and planning cities for communities and then managing them holistically. "Our purpose is to build



Our purpose is to build sustainable ecosystems that are resilient, and we have a clear sense of purpose on how we plan to achieve our goals, and shape how we view the journey ahead."

sustainable ecosystems that are resilient," she said. "We have a clear sense of purpose on how we plan to achieve our goals, and shape how we view the journey ahead."

Fully focused on creating sustainability-focused projects, The Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat is prime example of Sunway Berhad's efforts in developing a coexistence between mankind and Mother Nature. Built around a 260-million-year-old limestone hill, the retreat reflects mindfulness in preserving the natural state of the limestone hill. The getaway is also known for its natural geothermal hot springs, which has benefited visitors on learning about preserving the environment, thus protecting it for future generations.

"There is no end to development," said Sarena. "We can help complete all the buildings and build communities, but it is the initiative that these communities take that gives meaning to the entire process."

The crown jewel of Sunway Berhad still lies with Sunway City Kuala Lumpur. Recognised as Malaysia's first green township by the Green Building Index, Sunway Berhad continues to implement sustainability efforts in all its endeavours under the watchful eyes of Sarena.

"Our awareness towards green buildings has picked up pace over recent years, and it's encouraging to see people develop more environmentally friendly habits," she said. "We as developers can design and build the hardware, but we still need everyone to play their part to ensure a more sustainable impact for our communities and the environment."



09 AUG, 2019

INDUSTRY MAVERICKS

Malaysia Tatler, Malaysia

Page 12 of 14

DAVID MIZAN HASHIM

Founder, group president and director of Veritas Design Group

Entrepreneur Par Excellence 2009

"It is said that architecture is the mother of all arts, and it is certainly the most visible of humanity's creations. Cities are the timeless repositories of our history and culture, a showcase of our technological success and creative instincts as a species." David Hashim hit the nail on the head in this beautifully worded description on the meaning of his medium. Being at the helm of his 32-year-old design practice, Veritas has been behind some of the iconic structures in the country, and what keeps him motivated as an architect is "the excitement and profound honour of contributing to this amazing body of work."

From the firm's very inception, sustainability has informed the process of design in substantial ways. Every project undertaken goes through an internal process of ensuring compliance to a set of customised rules for environmental sustainability, called the Veritas Green-Check. Down to scientific detail, actual energy consumption by the buildings they design are calculated using computational fluid dynamics, with the outcomes of various building arrangements and material options studied. This is led by their Veritas Environment arm, an engineering firm dedicated to finding ways to reduce the carbon footprint of the built-environment.

The spirit of sustainability spills over to its people too, fondly called Veritasians. According to David, they have more sustainability-certified facilitators than any firm in the country, and within the office they launched the Care scheme in 2014. This unique programme motivates staff to identify ways to reduce the carbon footprint of their internal operations, from turning off lights to recycling waste materials and reducing usage of private vehicles. The substantial savings in overhead from all these actions is then returned to the staff in the form of cash subsidies for public transport.

Rather than an entrepreneur, David thinks himself more "as an idealist, creator and interim leader of an organisation designed to outlive me." The future of Veritas constantly



weighs heavily on his mind, therefore he ensures a succession of younger leaders by mentoring, motivating and empowering. He's proud that they now have more than a dozen principals leading a variety of design studios specialised by discipline or geography. "I believe that the best days of Veritas are yet to come. The next generation will take us to even greater heights, expanding our services throughout the world," he shares. 🌐

HAIR & MAKEUP: JOEY YAP



09 AUG, 2019
INDUSTRY MAVERICKS

Malaysia Tatler, Malaysia



EYE ON THE PRIZE
Here in the showroom of Star Residences, one of their latest projects, David Mizan Hashim has on the Jaeger-LeCoultre Polaris Chronograph

“ It’s important for organisations to have a deeper purpose beyond making profit. They must be able to answer the question ‘why?’. The core purpose of Veritas is to improve the built environment for the pleasure of humanity, this is what motivates us to excel.”



09 AUG, 2019

INDUSTRY MAVERICKS

Malaysia Tatler, Malaysia

SUMMARIES

CHIEF INSTIGATORS Sarena Cheah, Datuk Lai Voon Hon, Bryan Loo, Datuk Ruben Gnanalingam and David Mizan Hashim are each a force to be reckoned with, in their respective industries

In conjunction with Malaysia Tatler's 30th anniversary, we caught up with past Tatler awardees to find out how they fared on their path to success.