



**THE CONCEPT** of sustainability in the hospitality industry is fast gaining traction with increasing consumer demand and pressure for greater social and environmental responsibility. And the launch of the Green Building Index's (GBI) four new hotel and resort tools is expected to spur the hospitality sector to attain a higher level of sustainability in its business operations.

Creating a greener property not only reflects a hotel's com-



by Lauwa Lee

mitment to protecting the environment, it also helps to establish trust as guests recognise that the hotel is concerned with more than just making profits.

At the recent launch of GBI's new hotel and resort tools, its accreditation panel co-chairman Chen Thiam Leong says hotels and resorts, being at the forefront of exposure to international guests, are expected to be responsive to the green initiative and should be thinking of sustainability site planning and management of their properties.

The benefits of going green for hotels and resorts are obvious as the greening strategies will translate into savings in energy and water usage. Chen, who is also GBI Malaysia's founding member, sees reduction in waste generation as another benefit.

For example, recycling will not only reduce operating costs but will also boost the hotel or resort's image as a responsible outfit.

Going green pays, he adds, as these properties will be able to achieve better indoor environmental quality, which not only improves staff productivity but also guests' comfort.

Elaborating on indoor environmental quality, which will be given a total score of 16 points under the new GBI tools for hotels and resorts, Chen says Malaysia's GBI is looking at reducing the use of air-conditioning in guest rooms.

"To provide air movement for indoor comfort, we will be looking at the provision of ceiling fans with the contact switch to be placed at the balcony door or window to switch off the air-conditioning unit in the room when the door or window is opened in order to prevent the wastage of the conditioned air."

Under the resort non-residential existing building (NREB) tool, a new element that has been introduced is the use of only green vehicles to transport guests within the resort and from the transport hubs as in the case of airport or port transfer.

This will be given one point with another to be given for the provision of green transportation such as bicycles and other non-motorised transportation for staff. In terms of lighting for resorts, Chen states: "There shall be a minimum of three sub-meters for the three biggest energy components."

The guest rooms should be provided with multi-switches, auto-sensor-controlled lighting besides daylighting strategy for all perimeter zones and daylight areas. These include external areas such as corridors or compounds, common areas and porches.

GBI accreditation panel chairman Von Kok Keong, who is also the director of Arkitek MAA Sdn Bhd, explains that the GBI resort tool is more for beach resorts and homestays while the hotel tool applies to hotels in urban areas. Besides the NREB resort tool, the other new tools launched on Feb 27 are the NRNC (non-residential new construction) hotel tool, NREB hotel tool and the NRNC resort tool.

So far, of the 538 projects that have applied to be GBI-certified as at Feb 15, Chen says easily more than 10 are hotels as a num-

# Finally, tools for greening hotels

Green Building Index's new methods to spur industry to reach higher level of sustainability

## Hotels registered with GBI

No.	Project Name	Tool used	State	Status	Design Assessment (DA) Result Provisional Rating	Completion & Verification Assessment (CVA) Result Final Rating
1	Hotel Penaga	NRNC	Perang	Registered	Gold	Gold
2	GTower	NRNC	Kuala Lumpur	Registered	Certified	
3	Menara Darussalam	NRNC	Kuala Lumpur	Registered	Certified	
4	Vivatel	NRNC	Kuala Lumpur	Registered	Certified	
5	Arcois (SOHO, Hotel & Retail)	NRNC	Kuala Lumpur	Registered	Certified	
6	Airside Transit Hotel KLA2	NRNC	Selangor	Registered	Certified	
7	Sunway Pyramid Phase 3	NRNC	Selangor	Registered	Certified	
8	Three-Star Hotel on Plot Z10	NRNC	Putrajaya	Registered	Certified	
9	Proposed Upgrading & Redevelopment of Bangunan MAS	NRNC	Kuala Lumpur	Registered		
10	St Regis Kuala Lumpur	NRNC	Kuala Lumpur	Registered		
11	Mondrian at 7 Kia Peng (Hotel)	NRNC	Kuala Lumpur	Registered		
12	IBIS Hotel at No. 33 Jalan Yap Kwan Seng Kuala Lumpur	NRNC	Kuala Lumpur	Registered		
13	Plaza Equatorial	NRNC	Kuala Lumpur	Registered		
14	The Establishment Alila Bangsar - Hotel	NRNC	Kuala Lumpur	Registered		
15	Tune Hotel Jalan Putra	NRNC	Kuala Lumpur	Registered		
16	One City (Ph 2) - Business Hotel Tower	NRNC	Selangor	Registered		
17	Hotel and Convention Centre for Tabung Haji Complex at KUA, Sepang	NRNC	Selangor	Registered		
18	The Grand @ Kelana Suites	NRNC	Selangor	Registered		
19	Somerset Hotel	NRNC	Selangor	Registered		
20	Tune Hotel Klia2	NRNC	Selangor	Registered		
21	IBIS Styles Damansara	NRNC	Selangor	Registered		
22	Millennium Kings Hotel	NRNC	Malaka	Registered		
23	27-Storey Hotel at PT1775	NRNC	Malaka	Registered		
24	KK City Waterfront - Hotel	NRNC	Sabah	Registered		
25	Olive Tree Hotel	NRNC	Perang	Registered		
26	Universiti Malaysia Health Metropolis (UMHM)	NRNC	Selangor	Pending Registration		
27	Pulau Carey Chaiet Resort - 1732.55 sqm	NRNC	Selangor	Pending Registration		
28	Nouvelle Hotel	NRNC	Malaka	Pending Registration		
29	W Kuala Lumpur Hotel	NRNC	Kuala Lumpur	Pending Registration		

Source: Green Building Index

## GBI projects by state/territory

State/Territory	Registered projects	Certified projects
Kuala Lumpur	153	83
Selangor	198	70
Perang	43	20
Putrajaya	24	18
Sabah	9	1
Perak	5	1
Pahang	6	1
Negeri Sembilan	7	1
Kelantan	1	-
Kedah	2	-
Perlis	-	-

ber of them are part of mixed development projects.

Among them is Hotel Penaga, which had received its GBI gold certification on Nov 23, 2012 under the NRNC category prior to the launch of GBI's four new hotel and resort tools.

Of the two other hotels listed in GBI's website is a three-star hotel on plot Z10, owned by Putrajaya Holdings Sdn Bhd. This hotel, now known as Everly Hotel Putrajaya, was presented its certification for design assessment (provisional) together with Arcoris, a SOHO, hotel and retail project by UEM Group Bhd and Arcoris Sdn Bhd at the launch of the new GBI tools.

Von expects the figure for hotels seeking GBI certification to triple after the launch of the new tools. Of the 500 GBI-registered projects as of Feb 15, he says only 210 have been certified thus far.

Currently, GBI-certified buildings total over 90 million sq ft of gross floor area, which translates to about 431,200 tonnes of carbon dioxide emission reduction a year.

**"We must create a renewable cycle that is profitable, equitable and most of all, sustain our eco-system."**

- Chan

Under a green building programme can enhance brand image, reputation and community involvement that can earn the much-deserved international recognition, thus resulting in greater patronage.

Toh adds: "This is especially effective when undertaking reputable green building programmes like the GBI, Malaysia's own green building rating tools that are designed especially for the country's climate and comply with our building codes and bylaws."

Besides being endorsed by the local authorities, it is also highly regarded internationally. To Toh, the greening of hotels and

Selangor and Kuala Lumpur lead in both the number of registered and certified projects.

"We will be working with the Malaysian Institute of Interior Designers to develop the GBI office interior tool and with health industry partners to come out with the public health tool. Both these tools will be launched later this year. Each time we will collaborate with the industry [partners] because they see us as transparent."

For the hotel and resort tools, GBI collaborated with Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) whose vice-president Christina Toh feels that for the tourism industry to respond in a positive green way, it can start with greening hotel and resort buildings.

Although only a few hotels in Malaysia can claim to be truly green, she says many of the new and existing hotels have made significant efforts to become greener and started on the path to be more environmentally-friendly.

Creating greener hotels is important as it shows the hotels' commitment to corporate social responsibility or corporate environment responsibility. "This helps to establish trust as guests recognise that the hotels are concerned with more than just merely making profits."

Under a green building programme can

enhance brand image, reputation and community involvement that can earn the much-deserved international recognition, thus resulting in greater patronage.

Toh adds: "This is especially effective when undertaking reputable green building programmes like the GBI, Malaysia's own green building rating tools that are designed especially for the country's climate and comply with our building codes and bylaws."

Besides being endorsed by the local authorities, it is also highly regarded internationally. To Toh, the greening of hotels and

resorts with GBI also helps to enhance the natural beauty of Malaysia's unique fauna and flora through greater understanding of sustainability.

Concurring with Chen, she says environmental initiatives in hotels can help achieve financial savings. "This is especially evident for hotels that operate in a highly competitive market where the costs of energy, water and waste disposal are significant contributors to the costs of running the business."

"Hotel operators that can maximise efficiency and reduce waste will be more cost-effective than their competitors. This is clearly evident in buildings that have been certified by GBI."

Toh, who sees greening of the hospitality industry as long overdue, adds: "It will become a baseline requirement, particularly as the cost of non-renewable energy continues to rise, regulatory pressure increases and consumers become more demanding."

"Therefore, Malaysian hotels with business models that revolve around green practices will have the strongest opportunity to achieve competitive advantage by being ahead of the emerging sustainability curve."

The hospitality industry recognises green hotel buildings and sustaining the environment, community and their human capital as valuable resources as the "right thing to do", she adds.

Malaysian Institute of Architects president Chan Seong Ann, who is all for collective efforts to green the tourism industry, sees the importance of convincing the players to practise sustainability.

Chan says it makes business sense, saves operating cost, conserves the environment while encouraging repeat guests. Concurring with Toh, he believes that going green will help increase business opportunities as hotels and resorts rebrand and reposition themselves to appeal to a new and growing global market.

"We must create a renewable cycle that is profitable, equitable and most of all, sustain our eco-system," Chan adds. **FOCUSM**