

MALAYSIA LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AWARDS (MLAA)

Kayangan Heights Bags Top MLAA Awards

By Raymond Martin



AZMI HASHIM
Executive Chairman
AMCORP PROPERTIES BERHAD

Photo: Teratai Villa at Kayangan Heights

Recently, *New Straits Times* had the privilege of interviewing Amcorp Properties Berhad Executive Chairman, Azmi Hashim. He told us about the recent work the company has undertaken, and shared his thoughts on winning two Malaysia Landscape Architecture Awards (MLAA) for the year 2012, presented by the Institute of Landscape Architects Malaysia (ILAM).

The awards were for the developments of Kayangan Heights and Kenanga Woods@Kayangan Heights, which were presented with the Excellence Award (Developer Category), and the Honour Award (Professional Landscape Architects Category), respectively.

Can you give our readers a brief history of Amcorp Properties Bhd?

Amcorp Properties Berhad (AMCORP) is a subsidiary of Amcorp Group Berhad. The company was incorporated in Malaysia in 1965 under the name Taiping Textile Limited and was initially involved in manufacturing textiles for the local and export markets. We were listed on the Main Board of Bursa Malaysia in 1972. In 1984, the company changed its name to Arab Malaysian Development Berhad, following its diversification into property development and several other business sectors. The company changed its name again in 2002 to AMDB Berhad and, subsequently, to its current name, Amcorp Properties Berhad, in 2010, when it became a subsidiary of Amcorp Group Bhd. Currently, following a restructuring exercise, AMCORP's main focus is concerned with local and foreign property, engineering and infrastructure businesses.

How did the Group diversify to invest in the property field?

In 1982, the company ventured into this new field by acquiring 5 property development companies, namely Taman Aman Sdn Bhd, Exotic Enterprise Sdn Bhd, Seng Hock Realty Development Sdn Bhd, Living Development Sdn Bhd and Syarikat Kompleks Damai Sdn Bhd. This was subsequently followed by the acquisition of more companies specialising in property development, construction and engineering services, such as Arab-Malaysian-Toda Construction Sdn Bhd, Selaju Sdn Bhd and Walleng Enterprises Sdn Bhd. The company's successful past projects include Taman Bayu Mutiara (Pulau Pinang), Menara Pelita (Kuching), Seri Duta I and II, Bangunan AmAssurance, Bangunan AmBank Group, Plaza KWSP (Kuala Lumpur) and Amcorp Trade Centre, Petaling Jaya.

Tell us about winning project in the Malaysia Landscape Architecture Awards (MLAA).

We were surprised and honoured by this recognition of our work. The Kayangan Heights developments is a gated, low-density bungalow design, located within Section U9, Shah Alam, surrounded by several mature developments such as Montrez Golf Club, Bukit Jelutong, Denai Alam, Cahaya SPK, Sunway Kayangan, along with a nearby RRI future development. Kayangan Heights is easily accessible from the major highways and in years to come, with the completion of the proposed DASH Expressway, it will only take approximately 20 minutes to reach Kuala Lumpur.

The entire Kayangan Heights development, sprawling over approximately 400 acres of pristine forestland, is strategically positioned and protected from Klang Valley's hustle and bustle. It comprises four distinctive districts, each with its own unique features, landscape and facilities catering for the residents. The natural beauty of ancient trees, running streams and a tranquil lake, a clubhouse equipped with a gymnasium, swimming and wading pool all provide places for wholesome recreation and relaxation for residents' families and friends.

At Kayangan Heights, we observed that Amcorp Prima Realty placed great emphasis on landscape and the environment – can you tell us why?

The concept of Kayangan Heights is inspired by the beauty of nature. That's why the landscape is carefully planned to blend into the existing natural environment. It is also part of the company's efforts to develop sustainable designs. The facilities and parcels are created to ensure that they maximise the green effect experience. In addition, the recreation facilities, such as the clubhouse, were intended to incorporate the beautiful green backdrop of the nearby forest, which can be seen from the terminus of the stunning infinity pool.

What is the current state of Kayangan Heights development?

Of the total 307 acres of land for sale in Kayangan Heights, 50 per cent, or 156 acres, have been sold. To date, there are approximately 120 units of bungalows built by lot owners and 61 units of bungalows built by the company.

What is the next step for the Kayangan Heights development?

Kayangan Heights is a growing development and AMCORP aims to increase the population within Kayangan Heights by developing bungalows on the remaining vacant lots. AMCORP intends to continue with the cluster concept of 20 to 30 units, each targeted at the middle-upper income group. For the medium to long term, AMCORP expects to be able to gain higher premiums on pricing as the development in Kayangan Heights matures and becomes more extensively populated.

Besides Kayangan Heights, can you tell us about other property developments undertaken by Amcorp Prima Realty?

At the moment, AMCORP is focused on developing Sibujaya, an award-winning, self-contained, mixed development township of approximately 1,200 acres, located along the Pan Borneo Highway in Sibujaya, Sarawak. Presently, there are 461 acres of completed development as well as 739 acres of undeveloped and on-going projects. Sibujaya is one of the largest integrated township developments in the state and AMCORP plans to continue tapping local expertise through joint ventures with local developers and contractors to transform Sibujaya into a successful and vibrant township.



Sibujaya, Sarawak



NEO Bankside, London

Besides Malaysia, has the company ventured into property development abroad?

AMCORP first ventured overseas in 2009 when it acquired a freehold office and commercial building at 40/50 Eastbourne Terrace, Paddington, London. We were very pleased when the property was successfully sold for a profit of RM72 million within 24 months of acquisition. This was followed by a series of smaller acquisitions of residential properties in Lexam Gardens and Baker Street, which have all since been sold at a profit.

Due to the success of these ventures, AMCORP has gone further into property management and investment in London. Via a joint venture with London's prominent property development companies, Native Land Limited, Grosvenor Limited, Montrose Land and Developments Limited and Tarras Park Properties Limited, Amcorp Properties Berhad invested in one of London's prime residential developments, known as NEO Bankside. This was followed by the latest acquisition, via a joint venture with NL (Pollen) Limited and HPL (Mayfair) Pte Ltd, of a freehold, income-producing property in central London. Located at 29-30 Old Burlington Street, this property is in the heart of East Mayfair, long considered to be London's prime real estate area, with rentals among the highest in London and the world.

Do you think that landscaping is an important component in property development?

Yes. AMCORP strongly subscribes to the belief that landscaping plays an important role in property development. AMCORP takes into account the sustainable development aspect of the local environment and ecology in order to preserve nature's best. Kayangan Heights is a good reflection of this commitment and a living expression of our beliefs.

With the winning of the MLAA Award this year, how important will landscape development be in Amcorp Prima Realty's future projects?

Winning the award is further impetus for AMCORP to continually aspire to achieve the best possible standards in landscaping. Now, AMCORP will endeavour to incorporate equally intelligent and respectful landscaping in all of its future projects. We may even win more awards along the way!