

City & Country

Cover Story: Property entrepreneurs share their journey

The City&Country Team / The Edge Malaysia
September 22, 2021 16:00 pm +08



This article first appeared in City & Country, The Edge Malaysia Weekly, on September 13, 2021 - September 19, 2021.



Property entrepreneurs share their journey

It has been a challenging year for Malaysia. Many businesses have closed down, unemployment has risen sharply and wages have been cut due to the pandemic. In the midst of all this, however, some have been brave enough to start their own firms. In conjunction with the 58th Malaysia Day celebrations, we ask property owners about their entrepreneurial journey. They also offer advice and encouragement to a new generation of business owners.

Eco World Development Group Bhd

executive chairman and Eco World

International Bhd executive vice-chairman

Tan Sri Liew Kee Sin

Happy 58th Birthday Malaysia! As we welcome yet another year of nationhood, it is clear that there have been many disruptive changes wrought by the pandemic, which has raged on for almost two years now. While the going has been extremely difficult for so many, it is worth remembering that it is always darkest before dawn. By being tenacious and battling through the worst of times, we often come out better and stronger when the storm is over.

Entrepreneurship is not for the faint-hearted and never has it been truer than during this Covid-19 season. For those desiring to be entrepreneurs, the past two years offer a wealth of cautionary learning experiences. However, there have also been some encouraging tales of growth.

The big difference lies in the preparedness (both financially and in every other aspect), resilience and nimbleness of each business. It may depend on which sector you are in — some have definitely suffered more while others have thrived. Business owners have had to make tough and painful decisions to drastically reduce their cost structures just to survive to fight another day. Winners have been those with the ability to roll with the punches, swiftly adapt their business models, pivot and seize whatever opportunities there may be to continue to generate or even grow revenue.



Team EcoWorld, Liew (centre, in white) and their family members after receiving the Covid-19 vaccine under the EcoWorld Corporate Vaccination Programme (Photo by Ecoworld)

Since it was started in 2013, EcoWorld has sold more than RM23 billion worth of properties in Malaysia alone. Meanwhile, our brand penetrated the UK and Australian markets through EcoWorld International, with over RM14 billion in properties sold.

Guided by the seniors, our young people have been coming up with increasingly innovative ways to engage customers digitally to effectively communicate to them the great value proposition our projects offer and converting the leads generated into strong sales even during the most recent lockdown.

The push towards business-wide digitalisation we started in 2017 has also greatly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of our business processes and made us much more data-driven. This has enhanced the speed and quality of our decision-making and also driven down marketing and administrative costs.

EcoWorld was one of the first corporations to sign up with Vaksin Selangor. We have vaccinated over 8,000 people, who include Team EcoWorld and families, business associates, consultants, contractors and their staff (both local and foreign) under the EcoWorld Corporate Vaccination Programme. The happiness and relief on the faces of Team EcoWorld and their family members after receiving this life-saving protection is something I will always treasure.

Going forward, my greatest wish for Malaysia is that the hard lessons learnt during this pandemic will make us not just more resilient and innovative but also more compassionate and caring as businesses and individuals. Although the road ahead may not be smooth, we are a highly resourceful nation with many talented people — if we each are determined to give our best, there is much hope that we will be able to chart a brighter future for all Malaysians, together.

Ken Holdings Bhd executive chairman

Datuk Kenny Tan

It all began in 1980, with my humble beginnings as a specialist engineer. From there, I ventured into civil and building works, followed by property development, land reclamation and dredging works. And now, we focus on property development and are pioneers in green buildings and sustainable developments in the country. In light of the pandemic, we have learnt to be resilient by redirecting our workforce and pivoting to agriculture, and are utilising our engineering knowledge for agriculture.

For budding entrepreneurs, my advice would be to be honest: keep your promises because your word is your

bond. It's not worth tarnishing your reputation by deceiving others. You should also have a strong determination to succeed by putting in hard work and being hands-on, which I am a firm advocate of.

This year marks the country's 58th Malaysia Day. Being a multiracial country, we are rich in culture and arts. I reflect on my younger days when there were not many issues involving race and religion, when people lived together in harmony. That is what I look forward to seeing – Malaysia being steered towards being a developed country, while bringing back harmony among its citizens.



Tan at his durian farm, which is part of the company's pivot to agriculture (Photo by Ken Holdings)

Tropicana Corp Bhd founder and group executive vice-chairman

Tan Sri Danny Tan Chee Sing

My advice to people looking to become an entrepreneur is to get off the ground, grow and create success. When you're in a business, it's not like having a regular job where you get a paycheque and do the same thing all the time.

When I first founded the company Dijaya, it was based on good family values. The word 'DI' represents my name, Danny, and my wife's name, Ivy. Along the way, we have built the Tropicana brand name and achieved many milestones, and frankly, I couldn't have done it without the amazing support of my wife and family.

To be a good entrepreneur, you have to be flexible, resourceful, decisive, and possess strong networking and good relationships built over the years. More importantly, you need to understand the business well and possess the right attitude, backed by a strong and clear vision. There is no shortcut to success; we must work hard and smart to achieve our vision.

Of course, the golden rule of thumb is 'capital preservation is paramount to wealth creation'. Be mindful of what you and your business need and don't need. Anything more should be allocated to savings and investments, as capital preservation will always be the most important factor in wealth creation.

Finally, I am a firm believer in building a good brand and reputation. When you have achieved success, always remain humble, continue to learn and improve. Always remember — it takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it.

Despite the current market challenges, our team is agile and responded swiftly by enhancing our digital platforms as we rolled out a series of campaigns and customer-centric developments at strategic locations. In our aim to push forward and expand our foothold across Malaysia, we are also ready to take on more joint venture projects through our Tropicana Smart Partnership Programme.



Tan: Always remember — it takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it
(Photo by Tropicana Corp)

We invite landowners to join us, leverage on our expertise as well as strong network to unlock their land bank, or we welcome corporations to partner us to jointly develop our strategic land bank. Together, we are stronger and our collaboration will allow us to gain greater traction and grow faster.

My wish for Malaysia in conjunction with its birthday? We are all Malaysians. This is the bond that unites us. In the spirit of patriotism, unity and love for our country, let us continue to let our light shine in these unprecedented times. Don't give up, work hard and work smart. Stay connected, stay safe and stay healthy.

Glomac Bhd group executive chairman

Tan Sri FD Mansor

and group executive vice-chairman

Datuk Richard Fong

For those who want to be entrepreneurs, Tan Sri FD Mansor says, "My advice is that you must have an uncompromising belief and a burning desire, with plenty of passion for what you do. Most of all, you need to focus on the short term, yet train your sights on the long term and deliver sustainable success and strong performance year in, year out."

"It's a marathon with breaks of fast sprints, and a lot of patience, perseverance and sacrifice from all involved, including family, friends and business associates and business partners."

"Today, in the midst of this pandemic of unprecedented proportions, we are entering uncharted territory, something no one in this world or in their lifetime has ever encountered before. To remain competitive and to sustain any business now, I feel that innovation, coupled with technology, is the key to success. This will shape the future of any business."

He shares this anecdote on the inception of Glomac Bhd: "My father was a landowner, something he inherited from his forefathers, so you can say I had an early start when it comes to land. Land is money, but land alone is of no use if there is no vision; and vision must be complemented by a mission to translate it into action."



FD Mansor (left) and group MD/CEO Datuk Seri FD Iskandar celebrating Fong's birthday at their office in January 2015 (Photo by Glomac)

“I started this company with my partner, Datuk Richard Fong, in the late 1980s. We met in the early 1980s when I was the personnel and management director of Utusan Melayu and Richard was the business development manager at IJM Corp. We shared the same dreams, and I recall how we spent countless nights at roadside teh tarik stalls going through proposal after proposal, to start our own project, until at one time, we both got diarrhoea.

“Our partnership has withstood the test of time and also several economic crises, and we’re grateful that today we’re still doing what we love, just like we did many years ago. And of course, my son joined the team in 1991, and we now share our wisdom with him as the group managing director/CEO.”

Fong recalls, “Our first project launch was in 1988, a joint venture between Glomac and the Selangor state government. It was to develop a 60-acre piece of land in Sungai Tua, Batu Caves, a programme under the Selangor government to build low-cost houses to help stimulate the economy. We built 20ft by 50ft houses that were sold at RM25,000. We were so excited about this because Tan Sri had just resigned from Utusan and I had resigned from IJM Corp.

“Although we had no experience, we were very confident that we could complete the project due to the combination of Tan Sri’s good relations with the state government and my experience (of the past 10 years) with IJM Corp. Two years after the launch, we were so proud to hand over the completed homes to buyers.

“Even before this project was completed, Tan Sri and I had already started looking to secure more land to be developed. Luckily, we managed to secure an eight-acre piece of land in Section 16 in Petaling Jaya, where we developed a high-end condominium called Prima 16.

“In life, you are always given opportunities to succeed. You must be able to recognise them and be brave enough to take the opportunity when it comes because it could be a life-changing moment. It is 90% hard work and 10% luck,” says Fong.

In conjunction with Malaysia Day, both FD Mansor and Fong are hopeful for Malaysia to bounce back. “We wish that Malaysia will emerge from the current pandemic and very difficult time stronger, wiser, better. It has been heartbreaking to see people losing their loved ones and their jobs, source of income and financial independence.

“As a nation, we need to come together, set aside our political and ideological differences and focus on rebuilding the economy, lives and communities, and strengthening our resolve to face the future together. This is unlike any battle we have faced before, and we need to overcome it as a nation, however painful and long it takes.”

Ivory Properties Group Bhd founder and group CEO

Datuk Low Eng Hock

To become a successful entrepreneur, your attitude and mindset is very important, apart from having a solid business plan and well-thought-out strategies.

Persistence and determination are of utmost importance to succeed in the business world. Most businesses fail in the early years because entrepreneurs do not have the determination and vision to see their plans through. It often takes guts to succeed, so you must be willing to take a certain amount of risk.

I consider myself blessed and fortunate, as my faith in God has brought me through the many challenges, trials and tribulations. Being an entrepreneur is hard, but to maintain a sustainable business is even tougher. God has guided my steps since day one and to this day, I turn to God and pray for wisdom to navigate the directions as He is my Wonderful Counsellor and Provider.

I established Ivory Associates Sdn Bhd in 1999, the very first company of Ivory Properties Group. I started from practically nothing, with no land and with very minimal capital, so the plan back then was to go into joint ventures with landowners. During the early days, the first JV project I had was with the late Datuk Teh Ah Ba's (founder of precision engineering manufacturer Engtek Group) family, Datuk Gillian Teh and Datuk Tan Yew Thong, who gave me their full support to complete the Tanjung Park project in Tanjung Tokong (Penang island).

Ivory also took up abandoned projects as a white knight at Mount Erskine and redeveloped them into The Peak Residences, The Latitude and Taman Bukit Erskine. After the successful revival of these projects, we bought the land of Penang Times Square with a loan, which was the group's visionary development with an estimated gross development value of RM1.6 billion. In 2010, I led the group to become a listed company on the Main Board of Bursa Malaysia and I am proud to share that the group is a major property developer in northern Malaysia today.



Low (right), with Tropicana Corp founder and group executive vice-chairman Tan Sri Danny Tan (left) and Penang chief minister Chow Kon Yeow (Photo by Ivory Properties Group)

Over the years, the company is very proud that we have worked with big developers like Tropicana Corp Bhd, where I have gained so much experience from Tan Sri Danny Tan. I am always deeply grateful and greatly appreciate his guidance. Our company has also worked with reputable developers like Asia Green Group and I am always thankful for the advice that CEO Tan Boon Huat has given me throughout the years. We also established the charitable arm, Ivorycares, to organise meaningful annual charity events as a means to give back to the community.

I like to dream big. Apart from our residential and commercial developments, one of my pride and joy is our office headquarters, the Ivory Tower at Penang Times Square in George Town. It was a dream that came true when it was completed in 2014. My dream for our headquarters is to give the very best first impression to visitors and potential customers.

With the current pandemic affecting countries worldwide, I hope that the government will continue to steer us in the right direction via efficient vaccinations and solid economic stimulus plans. I hope that once this global health crisis is over, Malaysia can continue to thrive and prosper as it has over the past decades. My wish for the country is that the younger generations will live in a country that they will be proud to call home, just like we have. Hidup Malaysia! God Bless!

i-Bhd chairman

Tan Sri Lim Kim Hong

As an entrepreneur for more than 40 years, having a clear and concise vision as well as patience is a virtue. The difficulty I faced in the early years has taught me some profound lessons about not giving up when the going gets tough. Nothing is impossible if you set a clear vision, like how I was the first Malaysian entrepreneur to invest in China in the 1980s and being the first to introduce spring mattresses in Malaysia that 'revolutionised' the local bedding market and the sleeping habits of Malaysians. This has now extended to developing i-City as Malaysia's first technology city. Do not be discouraged but accept the challenges as part of your growth.



Lim at 8 Kia Peng @ KLCC (Photo by I-Bhd)

My advice to young Malaysians is that you have to be diligent, passionate and honest to do well and be successful. There is no substitute for integrity. If you are honest and hardworking, you will find success. Luck sometimes helps, but luck is only an accelerator. If you are not diligent or have no passion in what you do, you will not recognise the lucky breaks when they come.

I would also encourage youngsters to take full advantage of technology. In the modern era, technology has become even more essential for business opportunities and continuity locally and globally, especially in this challenging pandemic. Furthermore, with the transitioning from the fourth industrial revolution to the fifth, it's now the turn of artificial intelligence and smart technology to head the next phase of global innovation.

My philosophies in life include holding on to values like responsibility and transparency. I also believe in mutual benefits on a 'win-win' basis with whomever I interact or come across. Incidentally, these are traits that have made me more of an entrepreneur than just a businessman.

i-City has come a long way since it was first envisaged to be the first technology city in Malaysia, in adding another dimension to what is customarily offered by the Malaysian property development industry. In the beginning, there were plenty of naysayers and the biggest challenge then was to come up with an intact concept for i-City. The 'smart city' concept seemed to be more of an aspirational term than a reality, although many cities are making quick progress in deploying cutting-edge information systems.

Over the years, the flagship ultrapolis development has been gradually taking shape, with a gross development value of RM10 billion today compared to RM1.5 billion when it first began. I am proud of how i-City Golden Triangle has transformed and brought economic opportunities to our surrounding community. Going forward, we will continue to build on the smart commercial, smart financial and smart tourism components, which are the three core pillars of i-City's master plan.

Meanwhile, 8 Kia Peng @ KLCC is our maiden foray out of Selangor. Located in the heart of the Kuala Lumpur Golden Triangle, the 50-storey 8 Kia Peng @ KLCC has a commanding view of the skyline with all the major landmarks.

This country has given me the opportunity to be what I am today. I wish that the country will swiftly adapt from the new normal and 'ride into the future'. I also wish for the nation to learn from our past successes and failures, in starting a new chapter to strengthen our foundation for a more progressive and sustainable future. Malaysia will become a high-value-added economy and a net exporter of home-grown technologies and digital solutions, following the road map set out in the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint. May Malaysia continue to prosper, enjoy harmony and peace always.

Sunsuria Bhd executive chairman

Tan Sri Ter Leong Yap

To become an entrepreneur, start with a vision of what you want to achieve and set out your values as your guide. Surround yourself with smart, honest people who support your ambition — networking is vital. You need passion, a positive mindset and the ability to visualise potential where others may only see challenges. You have to be responsible for your decisions and remain steadfast. Remember, mistakes are merely necessary corrections on your path to creating a business or businesses.

To be successful as an entrepreneur, you have to be willing to invest time, hard work and patience. There is no such thing as ‘instant success’. Lastly, take care of yourself as you are your most important asset. Make health a priority and, above all, believe in yourself.

I started out in 1989 in the material handling equipment industry, and with commitment and hard work, this eventually resulted in Sunsuria being successfully listed on Bursa Malaysia in 2014. Since then, Sunsuria’s culture of reliability, integrity and excellence has been apparent in every one of our projects and we continuously strive to improve and innovate in all aspects of our business operations and ventures.

The group has since diversified into construction, landscaping and nursery, food and beverage, digital development, education, integrated healthcare, retail, trading and other complementary businesses and joint ventures. Our ultimate goal is to create a sustainable organisation of ‘Great Sunsurians’ while striving to make the world a better place.

On Oct 4, 2013, Xiamen University, Sunsuria and China Development Bank Corp signed the Investment and Financial framework agreement for the Xiamen University Malaysia campus, witnessed by the president of the People’s Republic of China, Xi Jinping.

This milestone agreement facilitated the setting up of Xiamen University Malaysia, the first Chinese overseas university campus. Located at Sunsuria City in Salak Tinggi, Putrajaya South, this beautiful state-of-the-art university is nestled within a sprawling 525-acre township carefully designed to reflect the guiding principles of being ‘smart’, ‘livable’ and ‘sustainable’.



Ter (right) at the signing of the Investment and Financial framework agreement for the Xiamen University Malaysia campus between Xiamen University, Sunsuria and China Development Bank Corp (Photo by Sunsuria)

In essence, 'smart' is the aspect where technology is applied diligently throughout the township to maximise the convenience of modern platforms; 'livable' refers to the township's various community activities aimed at bringing people together; and 'sustainable' relates to how eco-consciousness is woven into every detail in order to maintain the perfect balance of natural greenery necessary to create a serene environment.

Malaysia has flourished economically since independence, and has often been held as an example of a nation made prosperous by the conflation of different races and religions. We have faced difficulties together; even now, we are struggling against an unprecedented pandemic.

Yet, there is still much to do. I look forward to seeing Malaysia develop in a way that not only ensures that the growth of the economy is sustainable, but also that the economic pie is shared equitably among all the races. I also hope for a Malaysia that continues to create a business-friendly environment so as to support entrepreneurship and encourage new ideas.

To this end, I would like to wish Malaysia a bright and prosperous future built on the strong twin foundations of national unity and harmony.

Iconic Worldwide Bhd managing director

Datuk Tan Kean Tet

The fundamental principles of honesty and integrity are the keystones of becoming a great entrepreneur, besides being hardworking to achieve your goals. Entrepreneurs who wish to be successful must first earn others' trust in their capabilities, and to do that, they must deliver what they have promised to all partners, suppliers, customers as well as investors.

Some people may try to lie or cut corners in the beginning, but this will not work in the long term. If you are a fraud, your weaknesses and failures will surface eventually. Of course, you must be ambitious, but never 'talk big' or try to bluff about your strengths. Finally, concentrate on what you are good at and never give up.



Tan (second row, centre) leading the vaccination programme of Iconic Group and Iconic Worldwide (Photo by Iconic Worldwide)

I first ventured into the aquaculture industry in Penang approximately 30 years ago, before pivoting to property development in 2011 under Iconic Development Sdn Bhd. I made this decision because I thought that the latter was a more sustainable business for my children to take over in the future.

Our first property project was Icon City in Juru, Seberang Perai. Once completed in 2014, it turned into a bustling and vibrant commercial centre with a good mix of tenants such as restaurants, cafés and offices.

Fast forward to 2019, I emerged as the major shareholder of Sanbumi Holdings Bhd, now known as Iconic Worldwide Bhd. Since then, I have led the company to switch its focus from tourism to hotel management, property development as well as manufacturing of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Today, I am very committed to building Iconic Worldwide's businesses and its brand as a reputable company not only in the northern region but also the whole of Malaysia and beyond.

In July, we led our entire management and teams at Iconic Group Sdn Bhd and Iconic Worldwide Bhd to be vaccinated. This is to ensure that all of us are safe during this Covid-19 pandemic, as well as to prepare the company for the reopening of the property and tourism sector in, hopefully, the near future. Meanwhile, we are working hard every day to produce high-quality and well-designed face masks for Malaysian citizens' and frontliners' protection, as well as prepare our upcoming PPE manufacturing facility in Batu Kawan, which will start production very soon.

My main wish for Malaysia and its citizens is to win the Covid-19 battle soon, and for everyone to return to their previous everyday lives. Hopefully, we'll be able to meet our loved ones and friends freely, and conduct business or work as usual. To do that, of course, we need to stay safe and healthy now.

As for the economy, we understand that it is difficult to ride out the pandemic without significant sacrifices. However, I urge everyone to stay strong and help each other out, so that we can all go through this and move on to a new age of prosperity.

Trinity Group Sdn Bhd founder and managing director

Datuk Neoh Soo Keat

Becoming an entrepreneur is never easy. It is important to have a ‘never-say-die’ attitude and to always be aware of what is happening in and around the business.



Neoh (left) loading medical supplies prior to being delivered (Photo by Trinity Group)

Do not underestimate yourself. Believe in your own abilities and ultimately, others will believe in you. It is also normal to make mistakes, but learn from them and listen to good advice — this is all part of the entrepreneurial journey. If necessary, seek mentorship from experts in the industry who can give you good market insights and advice.

I was exposed to the business world at a young age due to my difficult background. This helped me to sharpen my business acumen, giving me a good head start in identifying new business opportunities, land deals and properties that would eventually be hot in the property market. As such, I was inspired to start a property development company and have never looked back.

Coming from a difficult background, I saw what was important in life — my family and a place to call home. This is the vision I created when I founded Trinity Group, which is to make dream homes a reality for all Malaysians. It is not just building with bricks and mortar, but building homes that make the community thrive.

We donated essential medical supplies to hospitals in Kuala Lumpur and Penang for frontline healthcare professionals battling the Covid-19 outbreak. As a corporate citizen, we are doing our part to protect and show our appreciation for the frontliners, especially the doctors and nurses, for their sacrifice and contribution to our nation.

The supplies included 1,000 pieces of rapid test kits, 10,000 pieces of three-ply surgical masks, 1,000 pieces of surgical gowns and 2,000 pieces of N95 masks and were worth RM125,000. They were distributed to Tung Shin Hospital, Hospital Selayang, Hospital Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Penang General Hospital.

My wish for Malaysia is for it to be on the road to recovery and I hope the country can unite and emerge stronger from the pandemic. I believe we will pull through this tough global challenge together, so let’s stand together as a nation and move towards a better future for generations to come.

Triterra Metropolis Sdn Bhd joint chairman

Datuk Seri Michael Yam and CEO Christopher Lim

For Datuk Seri Michael Yam and Christopher Lim, being an entrepreneur requires several components.

Says Yam: “The 3Es of Education, Experience and EQ supplemented by the 3Rs of Risk taking, Resilience and ability to Recover. Armed with the basic requisites of education with the competencies of the 3Rs of Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, the budding entrepreneur should quickly embark on as many ventures as possible within his/her risk appetite to gain experience across a broad spectrum of business dealings. In doing so, mistakes will be made but the invaluable experiential learning gained would enable him/her to have the best tuition. Mistakes are stepping stones for success.”

For Lim, they are the 3Cs of Companions, Commitment and Capital. “The right companions refer to either business partners or fellow workmates that chart the vision together. This includes a supportive ecosystem including our family members. They are the cornerstone of one’s entrepreneurial journey.

“For commitment, it simply means no shortcuts, sheer hard work, staying focused and being fuelled by passion over and over again. And lastly, prudence to ensure sufficient capital to sustain the business journey and also the entrepreneur’s personal basic needs.”

On how they started Triterra, Lim says, “I got to know Datuk Seri Michael Yam through an introduction by my uncle, Datuk Oh Chong Peng. Never in my wildest dreams did I think we would be embarking on a journey such as this. I have regarded Datuk Seri as a property icon, mentor figure, visionary and personality that’s larger than life. As a property negotiator and co-founder of Property Hub covering Mont’Kiara, I am blessed to witness first-hand how he has worked tirelessly to transform a former rubber estate into an international neighbourhood.”

Yam, who opted for early retirement in 2008, recalls: “From 2009, I was managing my own advisory firm while being an independent director on the boards of four public listed companies, including a subsidiary of a global bank. Then, the opportunity to take up a significant stake in a greenfield development in a prime location in KL was brought to my attention by my consulting team in 2015. When I found out who the interested party in this development was, I felt comfortable and confident to be in partnership with a family that is reputable, well-respected, honourable and most importantly, shares a similar value system as my personal beliefs.



Lim and Yam (front row, second and sixth from left respectively) celebrate the commemoration of National Day by bringing food and music to the work site for its very own frontliners (Photo by Triterra Metropolis)

“Seven years into the journey of conceptualising, planning and constructing, the soon-to-be-delivered RM650 million twin office block known as The Met Corporate Towers has been a success. That decision to go into partnership with the Lim family — with Datuk Wira Lim Teong Kiat as my joint chairman, his son Christopher as CEO and his brothers Daniel and Andrew as deputy chairman and director respectively — was indeed the right one.

Lim adds, “Not only have we forged a business partnership, but also a family friendship between the Yams and the Lims, and also a meaningful partnership with the Naza family led by Faliq Nasimuddin, which we will always treasure.”

For Malaysia Day, Yam and Lim wish for the government to respect and fulfil the provisions in the Federal Constitution and the tenets of the Rukun Negara.

Yam says, “Leaders need to lead by example and rule without fear or favour as long as they are transparent and accountable and act with good governance and integrity. These would go a long way in facilitating Malaysians to live in harmony, peace and mutual respect with one another. More effort should be placed on the vision of shared prosperity, especially in uplifting the socioeconomic well-being of the less fortunate regardless of race or religion.”

He adds that with 25% of the population aged between 15 and 30 years old, this segment will determine the nation’s destiny. “Their aspirations should be considered in the politics of the country as they shape their own future in light of the new normal with digitalisation, ICT and Industry 4.0 being the new oil of the coming years.”

Lim says, “Let us begin to intentionally honour one another as rakyat jelata — political leaders (be it in the government or opposition), industry leaders, NGOs, civil services, private sector, athletes and, of course, citizens at large — as God’s beloved creations. It is also a time when we should embrace a culture of ‘agree to disagree openly with utmost respect’ without victimisation or going along hierarchical lines. I believe it is God’s plan for us to live together to practise self-control, and learn to work, care and love for one another in this land we call home.”

SkyWorld Development Sdn Bhd founder and group managing director

Datuk Ng Thien Phing

My advice to those who intend to become an entrepreneur is to start young. Grab whatever opportunities and do not be afraid to make mistakes. Keep learning and turn mistakes into opportunities. Failure makes you stronger and trains you to be a better entrepreneur.

It is important to be an inspiring leader with a big heart, a good attitude and to be a good listener. This is where you are able to create a positive working environment and culture as well as motivate others. Also, keep innovating and always question the status quo because this will give you a greater perspective to predict the market movement in business and lead to forward-thinking decisions.

Since I was young, I had always wanted to venture into the property industry. I did a lot of research and discovered that everyone spends at least 30% to 40% of their income on property. In 2008, I started the property development business and never looked back.

My team and I took six years to set up the management team, laying a strong foundation for our talent pool as well as actively exploring and accessing quality land bank in the Kuala Lumpur city centre.

We positioned ourselves as a city developer, transforming the city skyline and providing our purchasers with the ultimate sky living experience. Our products are crafted around three brand pillars – Sky Living Experience, Value Creation and Innovation.

As such, the RM3.8 million SkyWorld Quality Centre was officially launched in Jan, 2018 as proof of our commitment to quality, and we ensure all SkyWorld products are Quality Assessment System in Construction-compliant.



Ng speaking to the members of the media at the grand opening of SkyWorld Quality Centre
(Photo by Skyworld Development)

This event marked an important SkyWorld milestone for championing Qlassic quality commitments in all our developments. Ascenda Residences @ SkyArena, our first project completed in 2017, has achieved a score of 76% in Qlassic. Hence, we worked even harder and achieved a score of 85% — the highest in the country — for SkyLuxe On The Park in Bukit Jalil.

My main wish for Malaysia is to achieve herd immunity and overcome this pandemic soon. It is very sad to see the cases increasing daily and people from all walks of life suffering. We must stand together and stay strong to fight this pandemic to have our freedom back and continue our daily activities in a safe and healthy environment. The government should also come out with strategic economic recovery plans to boost the economy.

BÖN Estates sdn bhd managing director

Goh Soo Sing

BÖN Estates was born from my desire to take a different approach to property development, and starting my own brand has enabled me to achieve this. Naturally, there were many challenges along the way, including convincing stakeholders about the importance of investing in a more energy-efficient building ideology. At the time, people had not yet considered sustainability as a key factor when purchasing homes. Another was pursuing the idea that we could convert existing wasteland into a lush scenic landscape with jogging tracks.

Additionally, as a new boutique developer, building trust with prospective buyers was a massive undertaking. However, we stayed true to our philosophy, communicated our vision well and made compromises only when necessary. I'm proud to say that this resonated with buyers, and we have followed through with our promise to create artisanal spaces that promote an elevated quality of life.



Goh delivering a speech on the philosophy of BÖN Estates' flagship project, The Estate @ South Bangsar, during its official launch (Photo by BÖN Estates)

To me, entrepreneurship is very much a spiritual journey, requiring integrity and a strong will to reach success. It begins with adopting the right mindset and developing a deep understanding of how a specific business works, either through hands-on experience, or self-education via research or taking courses. We engage with many businesses in our daily lives, but take for granted the lessons we can learn through our interaction with them.

I encourage aspiring entrepreneurs to first cultivate an open mind and be attentive to details, so that they can understand the motive and purpose of every business they engage with. Discover how they create value to serve the needs of customers, while at the same time generating sufficient revenue to stay profitable. This is a particularly interesting observation in the current Covid-19 environment.

Above all, I wish for the safety and good health of Malaysians. These are extremely difficult times, and this pandemic has certainly taught me some painful lessons. Life really is about connecting with people who matter most, and we all feel the pain of not being able to do that freely now. So, I fervently wish that we will all soon have that freedom again.