

Engage

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Architecturing passion

The architecture industry in Malaysia has been around since the pre-independence days and is overseen by one of the oldest organisations in the country. As Malaysia charts its course towards global advancement, so is the building industry. President of PAM Ar Chan Seong Aun speaks about the need for Malaysian architects to answer the calling towards the profession.

Getting to know
Pertubuhan Akitak Malaysia

Architecturing passion

The building industry of Malaysia is growing and local architects are in need. President of PAM, Architect(Ar)Chan Seong Aun hopes that more Malaysian architects will emerge ahead of the national effort towards advancement and development

By Sherilyn Pang



Ar Chan: Today, building works have almost doubled. From 2010 to 2015, the value of work undertaken by Malaysian architects has increased. However, the number of architects who managed to finish their education to qualify as professional architects is decreasing

The work of art in all forms is the materialisation of an idea to reality. It is a culmination of the intellectual and creative attributes of the artist.

Architecture, on the one hand, is craftsmanship taken to a whole new level, for it is a lasting masterpiece of its creator, reflecting the present and which yearns for timelessness that leaves behind legacy for the future generations to honour.

Contrary to the general perception of an architect's job, the process of architecture entails more than merely designing buildings.

Creativity and analytical skills

"The job of an architect is not only confined to the design of a building," said the President of The Architect Association of Malaysia or Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM), Architect (AR) Chan Seong Aun.

"They also oversee the stages of development of a particular project to its completion," Chan said, as he began explaining the framework of an architect's responsibilities.

"The first thing he does is to prepare a brief for the project and list down its requirements. From there, he has to prepare what is known as

the concept plan which will detail how he wants the building or the whole project to be integrated and look, upon completion," Chan said.

"This is where the architect uses his creativity and imagination skills to produce a building design that not only works well, but also looks good," Ar Chan said.

"Buying properties is the biggest investment of a lifetime for many people. Architects need to ensure his designs are attractive and safe, and provide lasting comfort and security."

Chan continued, "Apart from having the building look exceptional, the architect must also integrate the building's functions according to the law. This includes the locations of the fire extinguisher, the stairs and the ventilation system to house thousands of people at one time, among others."

"That is why, creativity and analytical skills are essential for architecture," he said.

Architecture industry overview

In Malaysia, there are about 350 registered architecture firms. 70% of this total consists of one-architect firms, making up the majority of the total firms which range in staff count from between one and 50 staff.

"From the total, I'd say 95% of the architecture industry are SMEs. The

other 5% have more than a hundred staff and I'd say these firms have, usually, ventured into the international markets," Chan said.

The architecture profession in Malaysia is protected by law and is regulated by the Board of Architects or Lembaga Arkitek Negara (LAM). It governs the profession starting from the definition of an architect under the Malaysian Constitution to authorising licences; overseeing industry practices, implementing Acts and enactments right through to assessing the education aspects of the architectural industry.

PAM, whereas, is the official body of the industry whose administrative duties revolve around Malaysian architects' welfare and the professional development of architects from the lowest to the highest qualifications.

"We have a rich history that dates all the way back to the early days of Malaya and which documents the emergence of the architecture field in the country," said Chan.

Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia

Established in 1923 in Malaya, PAM is one of the oldest organisations in the country whose history began with several societies in Singapore founded by British architects who followed the framework of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) a professional body formed in 1837 for architects primarily in the United Kingdom, and also internationally.

Upon her independence in 1957, Malaysia's construction industry grew rapidly in parallel with economic, social and political progress resulting in the need for a professional architectural body to attend to the issues related to the profession and the building industry.

As of the first quarter of 2015, the number of PAM members was recorded to be around 4,000 members consisting of individuals and groups. The authoritative body of architects, LAM, had registered 1,898 professional archi-

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Insufficient expertise to meet demand

"Today, building works have almost doubled. From 2010 to 2015, the value of work undertaken by Malaysian architects has increased. However, the number of architects who managed to finish their education to qualify as professional architects is decreasing. It used to be in the region of about 60%, then it dropped to 40% and then now, it's down to less than 20%, which is not really good. This has become a cause for concern for the industry," Chan relayed.

Asked why this has been so, Chan said, "That's the mystery we are trying to solve now. It's very difficult for us to answer that question, as well," Chan replied.

"I have been in the industry for more than 30 years now and have also sat in the exam panel before. To me, the exam standards have been the same since I took the exam 30 years ago. We have not lowered the standard, neither have we increased it. So we are quite surprised to find the passing level becoming so low today," Chan expressed.

"An architect's responsibility is heavy in a sense that they cannot make mistakes with their designs because they will be putting people's lives at risks for failing

to abide by the principles of architecture. They might even risk getting their licences revoked," Chan cautioned. Architecture, he said, is as extensive as pursuing a profession in medicine. "When I started out as a student, there were not many architectural universities in Malaysia," he said. "So we had to go overseas to study. In those days, architecture had the same recognition as medicine. Everything was very exclusive. So to be an architect, potential architects would have to go through similar challenges as doctors.

"Unfortunately, it does not have the same attraction that doctors have," Chan was quoted as saying.



itects; 1,991 graduate architects; 1,798 PAM Fellow and Corporate members and 1,124 PAM graduates, Associate Graduates and Academic members.

Architect's credentials

According to Chan, it is compulsory for every aspiring architect to possess a minimum of five-year architecture degree and be registered with LAM.

"Once they have graduated with the five-year study, they need to practise a minimum of two years in the field by spending one year of work in Malaysia. After that, they need to submit a logbook which records all their post-graduate works for throughout the two years which will be subject to assessment by the Board of Architects' Evaluation panel. The panel will then evaluate whether the architect hopeful is qualified to take the professional exam authorised by LAM. The terminology for this exam is called the LAM Part III Exam," Chan explained.

In addition, the Part I and II Exams, he said, are separate exams taken by aspiring architects who studied in polytechnic or diploma courses in other institutions besides the recognised architecture institutions in Malaysia.

"These exams are to test the skills and knowledge of the architects so that contracts can be administered to them. Building projects today are running into the billions, so it is imperative for the architects to possess strong element of skills and knowledge with regards to architecture," Chan stated.

Foreign interest

As it was, the bullish prospects in construction for Malaysia, an advancing nation with an ambitious aspiration, certainly summons the urgent need for local architects to answer the call to service.

"There are many foreign architects who are interested to come in and help us design buildings but there remains a concern with regards to their ability to understand our cultural requirements. In fact, 99% of buildings in Malaysia are designed and built by Malaysians. So we really hope more local architects will emerge," Chan said.

Architecting passion

When asked about the basic values that an architect must possess to pursue a career in the profession, Ar Chan said, "First it must certainly be the design, followed by the quality of the built environment and the safety and security of the public. How we design it will affect the way we build it."

"To me, those are the core values that an architect must possess in whatever he builds," Chan concluded.

Architecture, as is other high-flying profession, requires the commitment of a passionate individual, for only with genuine interest shall all challenges be overcome. The quest for accomplishment within a profession is truly a humbling journey, rendering the pursuit a dignified one.



Getting to know PAM

By Sherilyn Pang

Who were the past presidents of PAM?

Ar Chan Seong Aun (CSA): The history of PAM began even before Independence, and presidents in the past had been British expatriate architects who were serving until the leadership in PAM, which has been through several name changes, were taken over by Malaysians.

The first president of PAM was Kington Loo who became the first local architect to hold presidency in 1963 followed by Ikmal Hisham Al Bakri who had been part of the society since 1959. We are very proud because our 13th president Tan Sri Esa Mohamed has been elected as the president of the International Union of Architects in 2014 (until 2017 term), becoming the first Malaysian to hold the position on an international platform. I am serving as the 24th president of PAM since 2013. The list of President of PAM are as follows :
Fong Ying Leong (1969-1970), (1970-1971)
Kington Loo (1971-1972), (1972-1973)
Szeto Kok Yin (1975-1977)

(2006-2007)
Lee Chor Wah (2007-2008), (2008-2009)
Boon Chee Wee (2009-2010), (2010-2011)
Saifuddin Ahmad (2011-2012) (2012-2013)
Chan Seong Aun (2013-2014)
(2014-present)

What were your missions when you started your presidency and how much have you achieved?

CSA: That would be completing the Architecture Centre along Jalan Tanduk in Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur. After almost a year of grappling with approval issues, we are expecting to get the building plan approval and start work within 3 months and complete the building before the end of 2015 or early 2016. The PAM Centre is being developed to be a Centre of Architectural excellence for the country and a permanent home for the PAM Secretariat.
The second key focus area would be securing the Architect's professional fees for works they have already completed

our service that we can make major improvements through the adoption of BIM. BIM is going to be an important tool for Architects to compete both locally and internationally. Members have indicated that the high cost of software and lack of training centres were the two greatest barriers to adoption of BIM.

Under this programme to upskill Malaysian Architects, PAM will work hard to secure PEMANDU's funding for programmes of awareness and training for BIM in 2012. PAM has also set up priority action plans for its various committees consisting of new and continuing initiatives. In this respect, I am appealing to fellow PAM members to step forward to join these committees in PAM to work with our council members in this coming year.
Lastly, and not the least, PAM's architects have over the years been progressing and working towards a more sustainable and green architecture. We want to encourage more buildings to register for the wholly-owned subsidiary of PAM's Green Building



About PAM

Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM), or Malaysian Institute of Architects, is the national professional institute representing architects in Malaysia. (Founded in 1920)
PAM's history began 90 years ago in Singapore when the country was still a part of British Malaya.
The mission statement of the Institute is : "To promote the advancement

of architecture and the architectural profession for the betterment of society". The Institute provides a framework for its members to operate effectively; to do, to run and to get the business of architecture within the Code of Conduct and Scale of Fees.

- The primary objectives of the Institute are:
- To promote and enlarge knowledge, study and practice of architecture.
 - To provide a central organisation for architecture.
 - To assist and advise Governments, local authorities, or other private or public bodies.
 - To promote friendly interaction and discourse amongst Architects.
 - To obtain and disseminate among the Members, information on matters affecting the profession, and
 - To preserve and to maintain the integrity and status of the profession.

Scopes of duty expected of architects in Malaysia

Architectural consultancy services" means the provision of architectural consultancy advice and services pertaining to all or any of the following:

- a) submission of plans or drawings to any person or local authority in Malaysia;
- b) conceptualisation, research and development of any design for the built environment;
- c) any survey, preparation of reports including environmental impact assessment reports, or investigation relating to the built environment;
- d) project programming, construction and manufacturing programming, and product design;
- e) planning and development services including interior design, financial advisory services, project management, contract administration and landscaping; among others.

- Chin Wai Yeong (1977-1978), (1978-1979)
- Nik Yusoff Wan Omar (1979)
- Cheang Kok Cheow(1979-1980), (1980-1981)
- Tan Eng Keong (1981-1982), (1982-1983)
- Dr Kenneth Yeang King Mun(1983-1985), (2000-2001)
- Hajeedar Haji Abdul Majid(1985-1986), (1986-1987)
- David Teh (1987-1988), (1988-1989)
- Hussein Hamzah (1989-1990), (1990-1991)
- Jimmy C S Lim (1991-1992), (1992-1993)
- (Tan Sri)Esa Mohamed (1993-1994), (1994-1995)
- Henry Lee Inn Seong(1995-1996)
- P. Kasi (1996-1997), (1997-1998)
- Parid Wardi Sudin (1998-1999), (1999-2000)
- Tan Pei Ing (2001-2002), (2002-2003)
- Paul Lai Chu (2003-2004), (2004-2005)
- Dr Tan Loke Mun (2005-2006),

through LAM as stakeholder of the fees. I have been working in PAM for the last few years for this to be implemented. LAM has employed new manpower to manage this and streamlined the system to implement the fee deposit. I am hopeful that this can be implemented this year. We will start with project registered under the Housing Development Act. Architect's fee deposit with LAM as stakeholder is to ensure that the Certificate of Completion and Compliance (CCC) for the completed buildings is duly issued in a timely and efficient manner.
Thirdly, promoting the adoption of Building Information Modelling (BIM) by Malaysian architects to improve their productivity. One of the key duties as architects is to prepare integrated and coordinated drawings quickly and accurately. This is the areas of

Index(GBI) incorporated in 2009. The GBI is designed and operated to reduce the overall impact of the built environment on its surroundings.
From 2009 until today, close to 500 buildings have been registered under the GBI.

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