

Klang an attractive choice

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Not only was Ng the youngest Datuk then, but was also one of the youngest MDs of a listed company when he took over from his father Datuk Ng Thian Hock in the early nineties. Ambrose, who is in his late 30s, has been in the family business since 1989. In addition to having found the company, his father was also a two-term senator and former Selangor state exco member.

Ambrose is one of three siblings who are active in the business world. The others are Milton Norman Ng, who helms HIL Industries Bhd, an associated company and Steven Ng (fondly known as Junior), who is with A & M. "We're a close-knit family and I'm really proud of my brothers and what they've achieved," he says. A & M is named after Ambrose and Milton.

Taman A & M

"We've been in the business [property development] since 1978. That was when the first A & M project, Taman A & M, was developed," Ng says. Another memorable project was Taman Sentosa, which was launched in 1985. "I think that was one of A & M's most memorable projects when we took the initiative to develop a site just out of Klang and sold 1- and 2-storey terraced homes from RM80,000 to RM90,000, it was 40% off the market value for similar properties then and it was all snapped up," he reminisces.

"I've seen a lot of changes not only in the Klang property market but also from the perspective of A & M Realty, from being a private family owned firm to a public listed one. There're huge differences and you've to worry about returns to shareholders and all that," he says.

"You have to define your goals and my goal back then when I entered the family business was to list the company, which we did in 1995," he adds.

Besides property development and construction, the company's other businesses include the 228-room Melaka Puteri Resort and the 18-hole Bukit Kemuning Golf and Country Resort near Shah Alam, both owned and managed by it. A & M Realty also owns and operates the Funa Zushi Japanese restaurant chain and other food and beverage outlets.

Through its associated company, HIL Industries, it is involved in the manufacture and trading of industrial and domestic moulded plastic products, automotive parts and related products.

The A & M Realty group is also in-

involved in the palm oil industry, with plantations in Selangor and Melaka, and is involved in the provision of Internet services in Western Australia through subsidiary Up 'n' Away.

Changing picture in Klang

Ng has seen many changes in the Klang-Shah Alam corridor in the 15 years that he has been involved in property development. "Traffic is heavier, that's for sure and there're hardly any pockets of land left undeveloped between here [Klang] and

taling Jaya has been considerably shortened. But traffic is heavier too as numerous housing estates and their attendant commercial and industrial zones feed into the highways that have come up alongside them.

"The Selangor government had identified Shah Alam as a growth area back then, and since the Subang Jaya-Petaling Jaya areas were already being developed, it was only natural that development moved towards Klang," Ng says.

In fact, these areas as well as Pu-

ties in the area and if the infrastructure is in place.

To illustrate his point, he gives an example of why he thinks Klang may be a better alternative to locations closer to Kuala Lumpur. "Compare the price of a 2-storey terraced unit in Subang Jaya at RM380,000 to RM400,000 with a similar unit in Klang at RM200,000 to RM250,000," Ng says. The difference in price outweighs the location and a 15-minute drive to Subang is not very long. "You get to save and can stay in the outskirts where there are amenities and infrastructure," he says.

Competition

There is more choice today because there are more players in the market, Ng says. "I know people have been saying that for the lower to mid-priced properties, there has been a slowdown. But it all boils down to choice. Those days when you launched [a project], people purchased. Now people pick and choose from among us. It's actually good for us, too, and it's more competitive," Ng adds, echoing the sentiments of many developers on market trends.

And how do developers go about attracting people to their products? "As a developer, you've to have

a good track record and *boh luan luan lai* [Hokkien for being slipshod, not reliable]... it's like that with us in our Klang market; everybody knows us for our reliability," Ng says.

"I don't want to price myself out of the market. I want to be known not only for reliability, but also as a developer who can make some money for those who've bought into our properties," he adds.

Going forward

The company still has 5,500 acres of landbank left undeveloped in Selangor and Melaka. But for now, A & M is concentrating on its Shah Alam market where it launched 254 units of 2-storey terraced homes last year priced from RM160,000 to RM180,000 that have mostly been sold.

The 2-storey semidees that we launched in Kemuning Greenhills priced from RM400,000 were also snapped up.

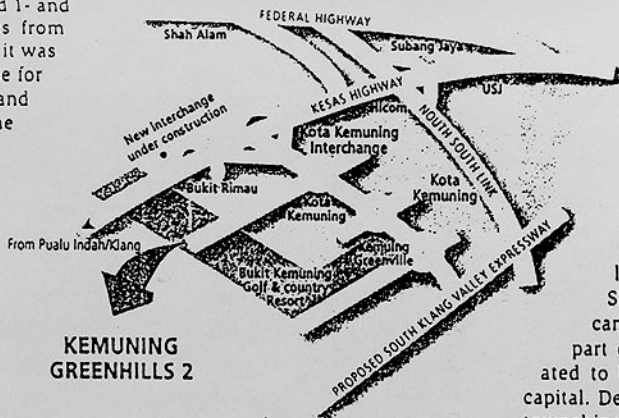
"Junior has come out with ideas for 2- and 2 1/2-storey bungalows based on Australian designs, practical and spacious, it'll be built around our golf course in Bukit Kemuning in three phases with 200 units total," Ng says. "We'll take our time, we don't want to rush, we don't want to keep launching, after all we've no gearing and low overheads," Ng says.

"We'll study in detail the market we're going into before we take the plunge," he adds. "I don't want to be ahead of time nor behind time, but on time."

"We'll move in tandem with demand in housing in the country." ■



An artist's impression of Kemuning Greenhills terraced units



KEMUNING GREENHILLS 2

chong are now integrated with Shah Alam and as you take the highway from Shah Alam to Klang, you'll pass by a number of developments like Kota Kemuning and Bukit Rimau as well as the suburbs and outer boundaries of Klang, he adds.

A measure of the seamless development in the Shah Alam-Klang corridor can be seen from the fact that part of Klang has been delineated to become part of the state capital. Developers are now building townships and residential areas in parcels adjoining both Shah Alam and Klang.

"In the next five years, land will be very scarce in Klang, if it isn't already," Ng says, adding that the infrastructure is already in place with three highways — Federal Highway, North Klang Valley Expressway and Kesas — serving the conurbation.

From Klang to Subang, it's only 10 to 15 minutes by car via the highway and in terms of amenities, "everything is here and there is a huge demand for housing", he adds.

"This is a market for buyers... these days they can pick and choose from a whole range of locations, prices and concepts, especially the younger ones who prefer lifestyle concepts."

It's not about the price anymore although it is still a major factor when you purchase a property, Ng says. People want to see if there are ameni-

ties in the area and if the infrastructure is in place.

This is a far cry from the days when Klang was a sleepy hollow, mostly known for its bak kut teh stalls. Today, major developers have ventured into the area, with developments that stretch from Klang to Shah Alam, Ng points out.

A trip from Shah Alam to Klang today quickly puts his observations into perspective as housing area after housing area, bustling with commerce and industry, whiz by.

Among developers with projects in the Klang-Shah Alam corridor today are Sime UEP Properties Bhd (Bandar Bukit Raja), SP Setia Bhd (Setia Eco Park and Setia Alam) and Mah Sing Bhd (Aman Perdana).

With the infrastructure in place, a journey by car from Klang to Pe-