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Master of the game

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THE master planning of any new development is important to ensure its sustainability and livability, and the Malaysian chapter of the International Real Estate Federation (Fiabci) will be recognising this in its Fiabci Award of Distinction (FAD) presentation to be held on Oct 3.

The prestigious annual event, which seeks to salute the best in Malaysian real estate achievements, will for the first time introduce the Master Plan Award to be conferred on a project that can meet the federation's strict standards.

Other awards traditionally given by Fiabci include Property Man of the Year, Residential Development of the Year and Infrastructure Project of the Year. Winners of the FAD can go on to be fielded as Malaysian entrants in the globally-recognised Fiabci awards known as the Prix d'Excellence.

"An award to honour the concept and effort put into creating an inspirational development that can blend with the existing environment is timely," said Fiabci's treasurer Yeow Thit Sang.

Yeow, a retired property developer, recalled that years ago, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in one of his stinging criticisms of developers, said, "All you people do is cut down hills and build barracks!"

"By commending well-planned developments, we hope other (developers) will be inspired to elevate their standards to a class where it's not just about hill-cutting and barrack building," said Yeow, a civil engineer by profession.

He noted that in many developed countries, master planning is crucial as the law requires aspects such as road and utility infrastructure, as well as community facilities to take into account growth for the next 50 years.

"We haven't adopted this kind of philosophy in Malaysia, and that could be why our structure plans have been ineffective, and why we have to build inner-, middle- and outer- roads and bypasses to overcome traffic chaos," he said.

Yeow point to the Subang Jaya township in Selangor as an example.

"It was originally supposed to be a 583ha mixed development site, but with the addition of the USJ area, it's now twice the size.

"The roads within Subang Jaya couldn't handle the load and that's why new roads had to be built. Even then, traffic congestion during peak hours is still chronic."

The new Fiabci award, he said, would be conferred on projects where their developers have looked into:

- * Market research before a project is conceived and planned;
- * Steps to protect or enhance the environment during the planning stage;
- * Managing environmentally sensitive areas in the development;
- * Providing for public transport;
- * Providing spaces for recreation, educational, religious and security (police and fire service) institutions and public utility companies;
- * Incorporating natural features of the land to enhance the development;
- * Incorporating innovations for the use of renewable sources of energy, efficient waste management through reducing, reusing and recycling of natural resources and rainwater harvesting;
- * Balancing the provision of facilities for all sectors of the population - young and old citizens, as well as the industrial, commercial and retail sectors;

* Incorporating features to promote community interaction and cohesiveness;

* Incorporating special provisions for security and safety aspects for the community and special provisions to cater to the needs of the disabled, handicapped, elderly and the children;

* Making a positive contribution to the city or area the project is located in; and

* Dealing with objections or protests from pressure groups.