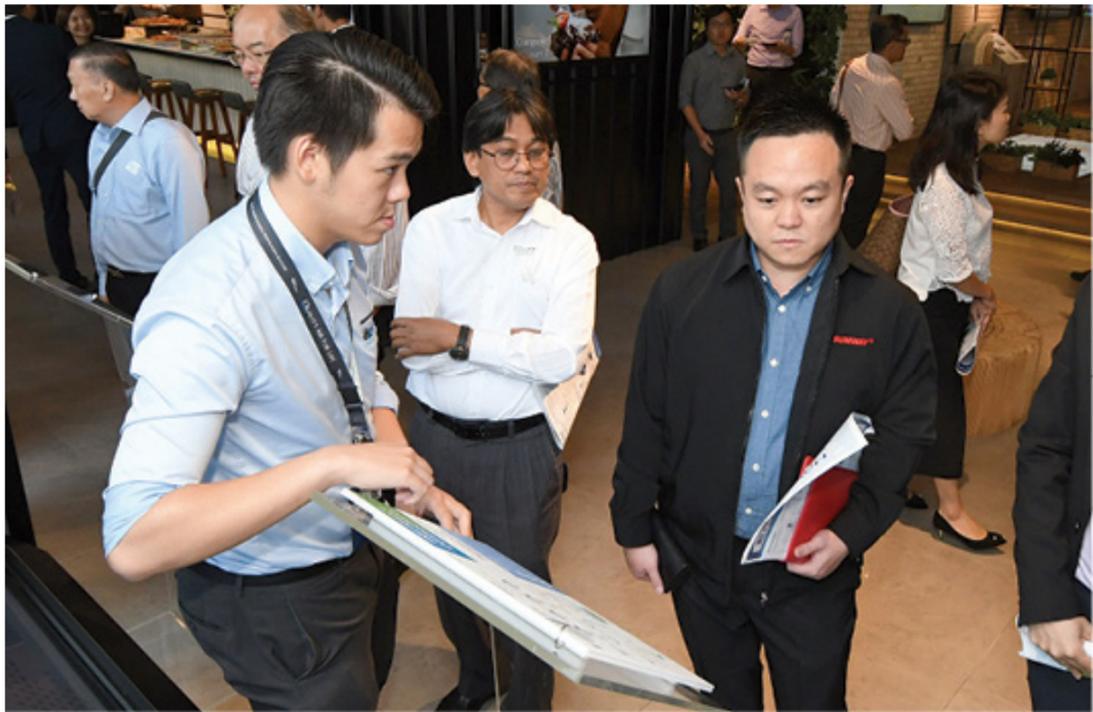


Dear developers, you can build 'healthy' buildings

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Sunway PFM Sdn Bhd facility management manager Wong Poh Hoong (right) and Tradewinds Corp Bhd senior vice-president of property Muhd Najib Mohd Rawi (centre) listening to an explanation of Panasonic's air quality management solutions.

More people are clamouring for good air outside but what about indoors? The air in your home or office could be slowly killing you without you knowing it simply because they could be odourless and invisible.

There are many ways one could ensure good indoor air quality and as prevention is better than cure, EdgeProp.my managing director and editor-in-chief Au Foong Yee urged property developers to take heed of what indoor air quality entails in the planning and design stage of their next projects.

Speaking to the more than 80 top managements of property development firms at the EdgeProp.my Talk on Building for 'Wellness' held in Kuala Lumpur on June 26, Au noted that wellness is more than just about sports or health retreats, but also about the quality of air we breathe in everyday.

"Mention wellness and the picture of a gym, yoga, spa and health retreats probably flash across your mind. Wellness is never as simplistic as staying fit and trim through a strict regime of exercise and diet. Wellness is more, much more than that.

"Do you know that, according to reports, we breathe in 18kg of air every single day? We in Malaysia are lucky. We only have to suffer the occasional haze — this would be the time when sales of air conditioners, ionisers and purifiers would spike. Yes, we can continue to take air for granted, but what we don't see could, slowly but surely, harm or even kill us," Au noted.

She shared that a primary cause of poor indoor air quality lies in pollution sources that release gases or particles into the air inside buildings. Meanwhile, inadequate ventilation would also heighten indoor pollutant levels which, over time, could trigger harmful effects, immediately or years later.

"To make it worse, as pointed out by the US Environmental Protection Agency, high temperature and humidity levels can increase concentrations of some pollutants.

"However, the good news is there are many ways to improve and protect indoor air quality of new or even old buildings. As serious and responsible leaders of the industry, we urge you to pay more attention on IAQ (indoor air quality), if you have not done so already," Au told the attendees.

The talk began with a presentation entitled "Designing for 'Wellness': Fact versus Fallacies" by the immediate past president of Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM) Ezumi Harzani who is also the chairman of Green Building Index Sdn Bhd.

He spoke about the potential of wellness-designed buildings as a trend moving forward.

"It is not necessary for a building to be iconic on its design, but let the wellness features make the building iconic. However, we will need time to change people's including developers' mindsets on building for wellness," said Ezumi.

The next speaker was Architect Centre's accredited building inspector and trainer Anthony Lee Tee. He shared real cases on how the air quality in a building can turn bad and affect its occupants in his presentation on "How 'Sick' can a Building be? — Kisah Benar".

"Indoor air quality has got such a low bar when it comes to standard requirements, even lower than one can imagine. [The developers] know it's there, but it's just not one of the criteria... It's not something that is integrated into the design, [on the contrary, the developers] put so much effort into the aesthetics of the design and appearance," said Lee.

Dr Michael Tan from Singapore spoke next. The CEO and founder of Life Research Wellness Pte Ltd shared about "International Trends and Practical Approaches to Wellness Living".

Tan said that while we are spending about 40 to 50 hours, or 90% of our time indoors every week, the awareness and understanding of how the indoor environment affects us and our health is lacking, let alone the concept of incorporating wellness elements into the design of buildings from day one.

He also provided the key elements that must be included in designing a WELL building or home. (The WELL Building Standard® is a performance-based system for measuring, certifying, and monitoring features of the built environment that impact human health and wellbeing, through air, water, nourishment, light, fitness, comfort, and mind.)

The half-day event ended with a demonstration on indoor air quality management at Panasonic Malaysia's Home.2.com Solution Centre. Also present at the talk was Ichiro Sukanuma, managing director, QAFL Business Promotion Office, Panasonic Corporation.

The talk was organised by EdgeProp.my in collaboration with Panasonic Malaysia.