

GAMUDA BUILDS ON ITS PEOPLE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Constant innovation and upskilling its workforce are factors in Gamuda winning the construction industry's Builder of the Year award.

By MICHELLE TAM

sunday@thestar.com.my

"POWER to the people" appears to be Gamuda Berhad's guiding principle.

The engineering, property and infrastructure company scoured the country for local talent to train at its Tunnelling Training Academy, and produced highly skilled manpower for the tunnelling industry in Malaysia.

Its MRT Centralised Labour Quarters also accommodates the varied needs of foreign workers in a safe and comfortable environment, and provides everything from laundry service to recreational areas.

"Our workers are placed in gated and guarded accommodation complete with modern amenities for their safety and comfort. This also ensures their productivity levels are not impacted.

"For instance, we make sure that their resting area is comfortable and has good ventilation so that they get a good night's sleep.

"We even made the water pressure in the shower strong because that's where you can relax!" enthused Gamuda Engineering managing director Datuk Ubull Din Om.

According to the construction veteran, looking into the needs of workers is the kind of detail that employers may neglect, but has good returns in the high retention rate of the workforce.

This attention to detail is just one of the many factors contributing to Gamuda's win at the prestigious Malaysian Construction Industry Excellence Awards (MCIEA) 2016, where it clinched the coveted Builder of the Year trophy for the first time.

Awarded by the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) Malaysia, the award which honours overall excellence in company performance and project implementation is meaningful to Gamuda as it coincides with its 40th anniversary.

Gamuda is synonymous with

several of the country's most recognisable projects, such as the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system in the Klang Valley and the SMART in Kuala Lumpur – the world's first dual purpose tunnel designed to mitigate floods and alleviate congestion in the city centre.

It has also worked with international companies on projects such as the Hamad International Airport and the Dukhan Highway in Qatar, the Sitra Causeway Bridges in Bahrain, the Durgapur Expressway and Panargah Palsit Highway in India, the Yen So Urban Renewal Project in Vietnam, and the Kaohsiung Metropolitan MRT in Taiwan.

"The award is a tribute not only to us, but to everyone – SMEs (small-and-medium enterprises) who have been with us for so long, and our people," said Ubull.

The ability to complete its projects in a timely manner is only one factor in Gamuda's success.

"We take an approach of focusing on sustainability and innovation. And this includes developing our people and SMEs," he said.

In 2016, Gamuda provided RM4.7bil worth of contracts to 608 SMEs that employ a total of 27,864 workers.

"We feel good about using a lot of local content in our work," he said.

Gamuda engineers also went to Germany to consult with the tunnel boring machine (TBM) manufacturer there after their SMART tunnelling experience.

"We co-designed and innovated to develop a first-of-its-kind variable density TBM which was proven

effective during the construction of the KVMRT (Klang Valley Mass Rapid Transit) Sungai Buloh-Kajang Line (MRT Line 1).

"So, innovation means you keep improving bit by bit, to achieve a greater result in the end," said Ubull.

He added that the use of the

TBM was the reason why they started the country's first Tunnelling Training Academy, to prepare a pool of highly skilled manpower for the tunnelling industry in Malaysia.

It is also the belief in innovation that spurred Gamuda into investing in the Industrialised Building System (IBS), where building com-

ponents are prefabricated at a factory, allowing for speedy on-site installation, and the Building Information Modelling (BIM) which integrates data from various parties involved in multi-stakeholder projects.

"The IBS will reduce manpower and increase productivity while the BIM will create more transparency of information, increase efficiency and reduce project lifecycle costs.

"In line with this, we are training our people to use digital tools such as BIM," said Ubull.

A good example of the IBS technology is how the segmental tunnel linings for the KVMRT project are precast.

"We're able to reduce our carbon footprint, because there's a reduction in machinery use. You only use the tower crane to lift it up and install it," said Ubull of their pio-

neering efforts at the fully-robotic IBS factory in Tanjung Industrial Park, Sepang.

The factory has the capacity to produce up to 2,000 apartment units per year, and production started in June 2016 for apartments in Jade Hills, Kajang.

The software-driven way of working also reduces the reliance on foreign workers, and Gamuda intends to manufacture and supply for the industry in future. After all, their focus on innovation is part and parcel of their ambition to be a market leader.

"That's what we intend to be, so that we can also venture overseas to support the government initiative for internationalisation.

Gamuda build on its people for sustainability

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“Underground tunnelling is one of the market’s niche areas, and we’re good at it.

“We have even successfully trained local people to be involved in the business.

“So I think we’re ready to export our services overseas, and we’re looking at some countries in the region,” said Ubull.

Gamuda’s track record speaks for itself. With the Gamuda Plant Operator School set up 20 years ago which has since trained 30,000 DOSH-certified operators in vocational skills such as crane, excava-

tor and backhoe operations, and other training and learning centres such as the KVMRT Training Centre that focuses on workers’ safety and health, Gamuda has long been preparing to be competitive at an international level.

“Construction is a prime mover for nation-building. At Gamuda, we’re not just building projects; we build people.

“Our people are our most important asset, and that’s why training them is our main focus.

“Together, we move up the value chain,” said Ubull.



“Our people are our most important asset. Together, we move up the value chain.”

Gamuda Engineering managing director Datuk Ubull Din Om



Safety first: The KVMRT Training Centre in Sungai Buloh, Selangor was set up in early 2015 to develop skills needed to deliver the Klang Valley MRT project efficiently, with a strong focus on safety and health.

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Practical training: Trainees get hands-on experience at the Gamuda Tunnelling Training Academy, the world's first dedicated tunnelling training school located in Kota Kemuning, Selangor.