



Participants of the study tour at Merdeka 118

Rehda Youth explores KL's game-changing offices

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Offices are being redefined by the way people work, collaborate and connect within them. This idea shaped this year's Rehda Youth Commercial Tour Series — a one-day programme on Feb 27 themed Executive Spaces, taking participants to three distinct workplaces: Merdeka 118, GDP Campus and The MET Corporate Towers.

Rehda Youth deputy chairman Choy Kin Mann said the theme was chosen to highlight how executive workspaces are evolving across different types of developments.

"We've been organising these tours every year and wanted to introduce something new. With Merdeka 118, we realised it is one of the very different new additions and have long wanted to tour it," he said.

"We also looked at who has built new offices — GDP Campus, which everyone in town knows about. It's one of the most beautiful working spaces we have.

"The MET Corporate Towers has also been a trailblazer, and is probably one of the most successful strata office schemes in Malaysia."

Landmark address

The tour began at Merdeka 118, where PNB Merdeka Ventures Sdn Bhd adviser Tengku Datuk Ab Aziz Tengku Mahmud briefed participants on the tower's design and engineering features. Previously PNB Merdeka Ventures CEO, Ab Aziz has led the development of the Merdeka 118 precinct starting in 2010.

Merdeka 118 drew inspiration from traditional songket motifs, expressed through a diamond-like faceted façade — about 30% of which is perforated to help regulate heat and improve environmental performance, according to Ab Aziz.

"The building is solid and structurally designed for earthquakes reaching 5.5 on the Richter scale," he said.

A key feature is an underfloor air distribution system, which cools occupants more quickly by delivering cooled air from beneath the floor rather than ceiling vents.

According to Ab Aziz, Merdeka 118 is the first building in Malaysia to implement this system across the entire office tower.

"We are targeting about 30% energy reduction. So, we want to make sure that we reduce our energy costs wherever we can. Even the lifts generate electricity that is fed back into the building," he said.

Another notable feature is the tower's occupant evacuation operation system, which uses lifts during emergencies.

"This is the first building for which Bomba has allowed evacuation by lift system because 10,000 people are expected to work here. Therefore, the lifts are designed for a three-floor evacuation," said Ab Aziz, explaining that evacuation will be carried out in stages starting from the upper floors.

Campus culture concept

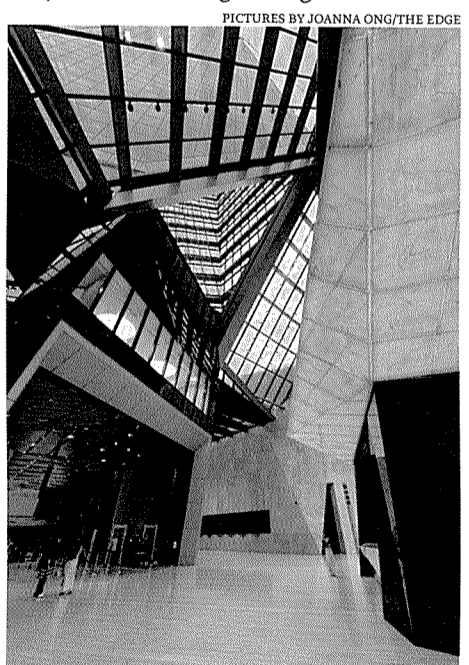
The next stop was GDP Campus in Damansara Heights, the headquarters of GDP Architects. Designed in-house and housing 400 staff, the campus reflects how the firm envisions its own work environment.

"We work like a university campus — back to school," said GDP Architects CEO and founding partner Kamil Merican, explaining the meaning behind the name. "We used to be in various shophots in Damansara Heights; so, now we've put everything under one roof — our architects, interior planners, project managers, engineers and adapters."

The building adopts an open studio layout intended to support collaboration among teams. "We designed the furniture, customised it... All the services in this building are fully coordinated," he added.

The campus also includes facilities such as meeting rooms, printing areas, a materials library and the firm's signage department, bringing much of the practice's design and production work into the same workspace.

The firm prioritised long-term functionality in the building's design. "We invest



The Merdeka 118 lobby features a 15m-high canopy



SAM FONG/THE EDGE

(Above) The gallery at GDP Campus is used to host exhibitions and workshops



(Left) Malaysiana Food Garden at The MET Corporate Towers is designed to be a convertible event space

in areas that make us future-proof. Too often, in office design, half-measures are taken," he said.

The building features exposed concrete and unfinished materials, reflecting the firm's approach to functional and adaptable design.

Shared facilities within the campus include meeting rooms, event spaces and Testing Ground, the firm's in-house café.

Offices as communities

The final stop was The MET Corporate Towers in KL Metropolis, Mont'Kiara, hosted by developer Triterra Metropolis Sdn Bhd.

Placemaking and user experience remain at the forefront of the building's approach. Referencing the well-known real estate mantra "location, location, location", Triterra Metropolis CEO Christopher Lim said the development emphasises "location, concept and pricing".

"As property developers, whatever we do is for the community. It's really not about us — it's about the occupants... We continuously look at how to upgrade our common areas," said Lim.

Describing it as a new "business class", he said the development was conceived as a third place — a social environment between home ("first place") and work ("second place"). The mixed-use project combines communal areas and event spaces, alongside a curated mix of food-and-beverage and lifestyle tenants.

"We always meet our business associates in a third neutral place; so, why not have this incorporated into the building?" said

Triterra Metropolis chief operating officer Richard Khoo.

Facilities include multiple event spaces such as a food garden that is also used to host activities, as well as the Glass Box and a rooftop terrace.

According to Lim, the management team continues to introduce measures aimed at improving tenant convenience and accessibility. These include plans for a childcare facility as well as the installation of chairlifts from the car park to the ground floor retail area for improved accessibility.

Lessons from experience

The tour concluded with a "Voice of Experience" session, a new segment in this year's programme.

The inaugural session featured Triterra co-chairman Datuk Seri Michael Yam, who offered reflections on his decades-long career in property development.

"In uncertain times like this, how does a developer or a company stay true to its principles in terms of the long term versus cash flow and quick profits?" said Yam.

"It's all about risk management. You really need to consider all the factors that will influence your industry — the most important being cash flow. You need to simulate worst-case scenarios. Can your balance sheet carry you through?"

With Malaysia's growing demand for Grade-A office spaces, the tour emphasises how modern workplaces are evolving from just corporate addresses into more sustainable, intentional and people-centric environments. **E**