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The industrial property market is entering a stage of normalisation, marked by stable growth and encouraging activity across the five economic corridors in Peninsular and East Malaysia. At a more micro level, experts point to the rise of artificial intelligence and automation, the challenges small and medium enterprises face in obtaining halal certification, and the growing importance of centralised labour quarters and renewable energy solutions in meeting companies' requirements and specifications.



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 **Bandar Bukit Raja**

*Artist's Impression

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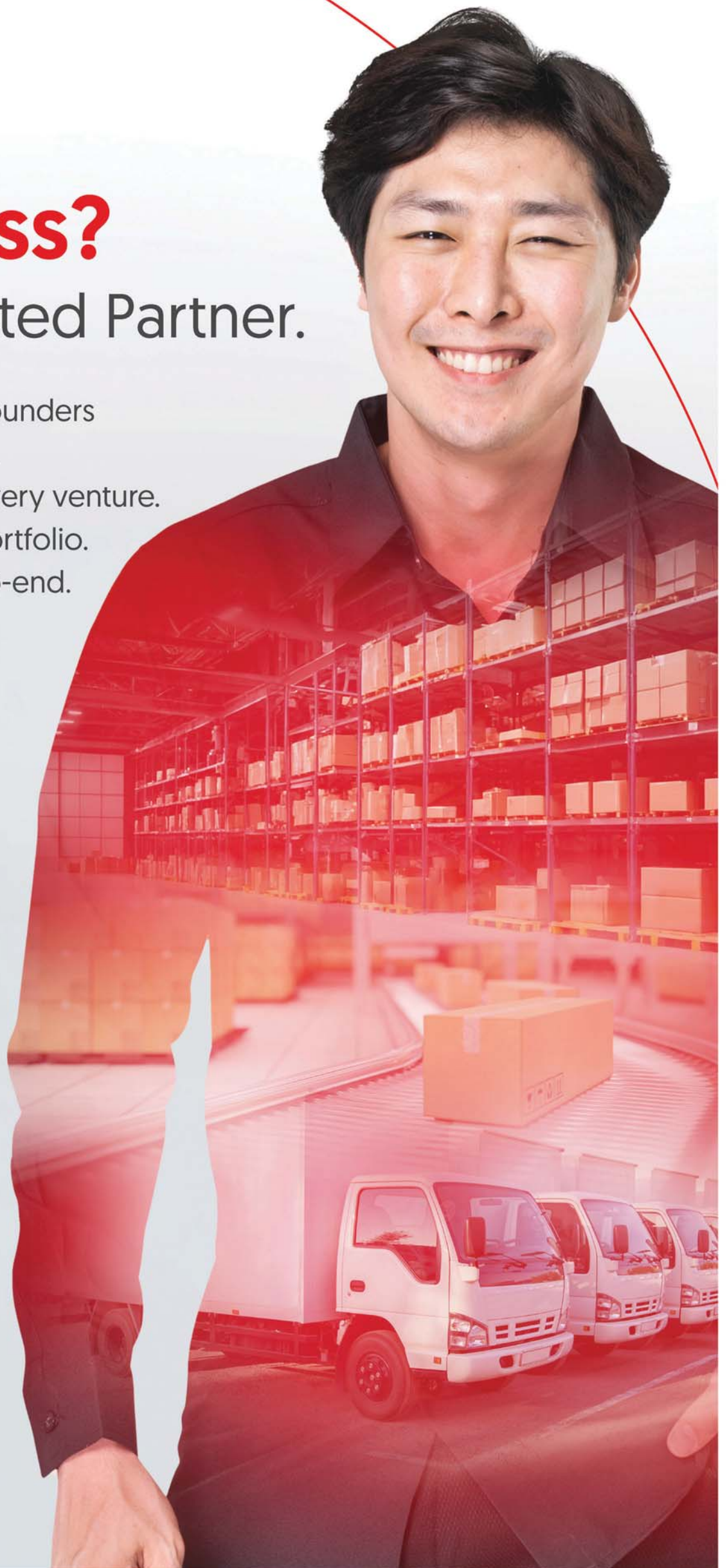
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Preparing the groundwork for success

Imagine a football team where instead of 11 players, there is only one. This person is the goalkeeper, the defender, the striker and even the substitute. The team certainly would not go far in any game, much less make it to the World Cup.

Similarly, no one can single-handedly set up an industrial production facility. That is why Sime Darby Property Bhd (SDP) (KL:SIMEPROP) has put in place a system to ensure that any and every industrial product it develops will be to specifications and that all supporting systems will be in place to provide stakeholders with ease of mind.

“SDP offers a multidimensional industrial growth platform built around six core pillars: industrial technology, human capital, project funding, sustainability, one-stop facilitation and business ecosystem,” says Appollo Leong, its chief operating officer of township development.

“This integrated approach brings together strategic landbanking, infrastructure-ready developments, business facilitation, workforce solutions, customised industrial development and operational support to help businesses establish, scale and grow with greater confidence.”

SDP has industrial park developments in key and high-growth economic corridors around the Klang Valley, including Bandar Bukit Raja Business Park in Klang, Elmina Business Park and Elmina East Industrial Park in Shah Alam, and Serenia Industrial Park in Sepang.

Beyond the Klang Valley, the developer has Vision Business Park, Hamilton Industrial Park and XME Business Park Nilai Impian in Nilai, Negeri Sembilan. Down south in Johor, SDP is developing Bandar Universiti Pagoh Industrial Park in the northern part of the state.

Each industrial park provides similar services and infrastructure to cater for the needs of its users. They are guided by three defining pillars that differentiate SDP's products and services from the rest of the market.

The first is a strategic location with great connectivity. SDP's industrial parks are connected to major highways, ports and airports, with the ability to capture not only the domestic manufacturing demand but also Asean logistics and cross-border trade flows.

The second is customised and tailored industrial intelligence. The developer is able to provide a range of factories for small and medium enterprises, including bespoke built-to-suit ones to fulfil the needs of hyperscale data centres, manufacturing and hypermarket distribution centres, with the inclusion of robotic systems known as Automated Storage and Retrieval Systems.

“We also offer business facilitation for foreign business establishments through strong ties with Miti (Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry), Mida (Malaysian Investment Development Authority), Invest Selangor and Invest Negeri Sembilan, providing go-to-market assistance and flexible business operating models for local or multinational industrial enterprises,” says Leong.

The last pillar is future-ready environmental, social and governance (ESG) infrastructure and ecosystem for business enablement, where SDP establishes the foundation to ensure that companies meet all ESG standards.

“By integrating business facilitation centres, human capital solutions and capital expenditure funding access, we have



Elmina Business Park 2 is the next-generation extension of high-quality, ESG-oriented industrial parks with strategic connections to three major expressways – the GCE, NSE and LATAR



Bandar Bukit Raja Business Park is the country's first GreenRE Platinum-rated industrial township that offers climate resilient infrastructure to ensure business continuity against adverse weather conditions

the ability to build a thriving, integrated community where tenants gain immediate supply chain advantages. We embed sustainability by design, featuring reliable energy and water supply, well-planned roads and efficient drainage systems within a secure industrial park environment that boasts abundant green spaces and renewable energy solutions,” says Leong.

Industrial parks with purpose

Tailoring a product to meet the needs of all stakeholders is something SDP does in all the industrial parks it develops.

In Johor, its Bandar Universiti Pagoh Industrial Park fronts and is directly connected to the North-South Expressway (NSE) via the Pagoh Interchange, which allows seamless access to Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru and Singapore, establishing the park as a regional manufacturing and logistics base.

“With large industrial land parcels, infrastructure-ready plots, attractive entry pricing and ample room for future expansion, Pagoh presents a rare opportunity for

occupiers and investors to secure sizeable industrial footprints at significantly more competitive land costs compared to mature industrial hubs in the Klang Valley and southern Johor,” says Leong.

This 430 acres of leasehold industrial park is located in the 4,099-acre Bandar University Pagoh township. It features 190 industrial plots (94 launched with 89 already taken up). The plot's indicative pricing is RM35 psf.

In Nilai, XME Business Park and Hamilton Industrial Park offer ready-built factories to meet the growing demand in the manufacturing and logistics industries, says Leong.

“With a choice of link factories with a built-up area of 3,351 sq ft and semi-detached units between 7,000 and 17,000 sq ft, both XME Business Park and Hamilton Industrial Park offer easy access to the NSE and Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) via the upcoming NLE (Nilai-Labu-Enstek) road.”

Currently, factories in Phase 3 of XME

Business Park 2 are available for purchase. The 15-acre freehold development comprises of 59 units with 39 link and 20 semidee factories, all with triple volume warehouse space and a minimum 9m height clearance.

Also noteworthy are the link factories that can accommodate 20ft-long trucks at the rear loading area with a maximum floor loading capacity of 5kN/m², while the semidees can accommodate 40ft-long trucks with a floor loading capacity of 10kN/m². The selling prices are from RM1.5 million for the link factories and RM3.85 million for the semidees.

As for the 892-acre freehold Hamilton Industrial Park, the existing products are ready-built factories with built-ups from 5,720 sq ft and a starting price of RM2.87 million. Its upcoming launches will feature ready-built factories with larger built-ups of 7,928 to 14,109 sq ft. Besides the ready-built units, it also has industrial lots on offer, starting from one acre with prices from RM3.7 million.

Designed with sustainability and well-

PICTURES BY SDP



Vision Business Park has incorporated a recreational space for the well-being of the park's occupants

ness in mind, SDP has incorporated recreational landscaped parks, as well as jogging and walking paths, to promote mental and physical health in Hamilton Industrial Park.

Meanwhile, in Vision Business Park, which stretches over 760 acres, flexible options of one- to five-acre industrial lots are offered for customised warehouses or factories. The indicative starting price is RM3.3 million.

The industrial park also features a central recreational park for its occupants' well-being. One unique feature is how the park has 137 acres set aside for commercial spaces, while the remaining land is for industrial use.

Leong highlights that the project was master-planned to support the next generation of manufacturing, logistics and technology-driven businesses that seek scalable growth beyond the Klang Valley.

"Strategically located in a mature industrial zone, next to the fastest growing halal cluster — Techpark @ Bandar Enstek — where established global brands such as Coca-Cola and Ajinomoto are located, Vision Business Park is set to be the next industrial growth area in Nilai South with direct accessibility to the upcoming NLE road, connecting it to KLIA, KTM Nilai and NSE," he says.

Meanwhile, in Selangor, SDP's strategic footprint covers high-growth corridors, from Sepang to Klang.

Another industrial park that is located close to KLIA — a 15-minute drive from the airport — and directly connected via a dedicated interchange to the Elite Expressway, alongside instant access to the Putrajaya-Cyberjaya Expressway and Maju Expressway, is Serenia Industrial Park.

This 112-acre park has a mix of industrial and commercial properties. Its upcoming launch in 3Q2026 will feature terraced factories and shopoffices with an indicative starting price of RM3.6 million and RM2.3 million respectively.

Its previously launched S Series, with factories that have built-ups of 10,363 to 25,354 sq ft and priced from RM6.8 million to over RM25 million, is sold out.

The products here have been built with solar-panel-ready roofing frameworks, integrated rainwater harvesting systems and, for added security, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles such as well-lit pathways and natural green hedging barriers across the township.

"The overarching conceptual theme of Serenia Industrial Park is structured around the 'Smart & Sustainable Hub' framework. The design philosophy intentionally pivots away from outdated, polluted factory zones, replacing them with a highly organised, eco-conscious industrial ecosystem," says Leong.



Hamilton Industrial Park offers ready-built factories to meet the growing demand in the manufacturing and logistics industries

Further into the state, the developer offers Elmina Business Park 2 and Bandar Bukit Raja Business Park.

According to Leong, Elmina Business Park 2 is the next-generation extension of high-quality, ESG-oriented industrial parks with strategic connections to three major expressways — the Guthrie Corridor Expressway (GCE), NSE and Kuala Lumpur-Kuala Selangor Expressway (LATAR).

"The park offers a rare opportunity for industrialists seeking strategic, freehold mid-sized industrial lots of between two and four acres, boasting easy access and prime visibility to the GCE in a mature industrial ecosystem and master-planned environment," he says.

Over at SDP's 988-acre Bandar Bukit Raja Business Park, there is a mix of industrial land and ready-built factories. It is the country's first GreenRE Platinum-rated industrial township, offering planned climate-resilient infrastructure to ensure business continuity against adverse weather conditions.

"Engineered for long-term scalability and equipped with ESG-aligned infrastructure, the highly anticipated semidee factories from 70ft by 150ft with built-ups of 5,040 sq ft, are designed to catalyse business growth across diverse industrial sectors. They are expected to be introduced in the second half of 2026," says Leong.



XME Business Park offers ready-built factories and has easy access to the NSE and KLIA via the upcoming NLE



MOHD SHAHRIN YAHYA/THE EDGE

When businesses expand and operate with us, they integrate into a thriving, self-contained township ecosystem complete with residential precincts, commercial hubs and dedicated infrastructure."

— Leong

"To complement the launch of the semidees, Bandar Bukit Raja will be launching The Masterpiece Collection Series 2 detached factories with land size of 109ft by 200ft and built-ups of 8,414 sq ft, which marks a continuation of our award-winning industrial offering in the region," he adds.

Ongoing developments in the park include Masterpiece Collection Phase 3, which will offer 20 market-ready industrial units with built-ups starting from 30,000 sq ft, which is slated for completion in 4Q2026 and is specifically designed for leasing arrangements. Another option would be the Cubiz Collection located at Elmina East Industrial Park that was completed in 2Q2026, not far from Elmina Business Park 2. It offers 20 units with built-ups starting from 29,000 sq ft.

Unlocking future potential

While the concepts of each industrial park and their offerings may differ from the others slightly, the core business model remains the same.

"Beyond these ready options, what truly sets us apart across our prime industrial parks is our comprehensive built-to-suit programme. We recognise that no two industries share the same operational DNA. Therefore, SDP offers foreign and local industrialists flexible business models to match their financial strategies, whether to own, lease or have a built-to-suit and lease," says Leong.

As such, the developer provides high-flexibility, asset-light solutions for multinational corporations and high-growth enterprises through two frameworks — Lease-Only model and Built-to-Suit-to-Lease (BTSL) programme.

An example of the Lease-Only model is the Cubiz Collection located at Elmina East Industrial Park, not far from Elmina Business Park 2. It offers 20 units with built-ups of 29,000 to 38,553 sq ft.

"Driven by robust market demand and paired with competitive leasing options, this development is perfectly positioned for businesses requiring speed, flexibility and an accelerated go-to-market timeline," says Leong.

Meanwhile, the BTSL programme provides companies with the ability to customise their factory to their specifications and lease it from the developer.

"This programme is backed by an elite track record of delivering critical, large-scale infrastructure for global technology and logistics giants, anchored by landmark achievements, such as Mydin's state-of-the-art warehouse and the Pearl Computing Hyperscale Data Centre development in Elmina," he says.

The developer is a big believer in the long game when it comes to industrial real estate, hence the attention to detail and efforts to ensure compliance with ESG standards, as well as the quality infrastructure so that businesses can run smoothly.

"When businesses expand and operate with us, they integrate into a thriving, self-contained township ecosystem complete with residential precincts, commercial hubs and dedicated infrastructure. We actively facilitate their entire market entry by offering robust financial pathways and end-to-end business set-up facilitation, providing the ultimate certainty that their operations are forward-looking from day one," says Leong.



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Slow but steady adoption of artificial intelligence in the industrial sector

BY **WONG KING WAI**
city.country@bizedge.com

As the cost of production increases, more industrial players are looking at how artificial intelligence (AI) and automation can enhance the cost efficiency of their operations. However, this trend has raised some critical questions: Will this adoption of Industry 4.0 trigger an increase in unemployment, or a shift in the types of workers needed? Is Malaysia ready to take on the challenges that might arise, and take advantage of opportunities as demand for new tech-accommodating industrial infrastructure rises?

Experts say while specific industries have adopted AI faster due to the nature and need of their business, the overall adoption rate of AI in Malaysia is growing slowly but steadily — a contrast to automation, which is already embraced.

Knight Frank Malaysia land and industrial solution senior executive director Allan Sim says, “Based on our observation, AI adoption in Malaysia’s industrial sector is perhaps still in the adaptive stage, with most manufacturers in the transition or adoption phase. While only a smaller portion have fully adopted AI, the broader shift towards automation has been more evident.”

This assertion is supported by a statement from the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturing Selangor and Kuala Lumpur branch in October 2025, that only 26%

of manufacturers have adopted AI, while others are in the exploratory stage.

“Many manufacturers are moving away from labour-intensive operations and gradually adopting technologies such as robotics, warehouse management systems and industrial IoT (Internet of Things), before progressing into AI-driven solutions. This transition has been supported by national initiatives like Industry4WRD, as well as the growing ecosystem of local automation players,” says Sim.

He further elaborates that from 2010 to June 2024, the number of local companies specialising in factory automation had doubled, with the top 10 companies collectively valued at over RM25.8 billion, according to Malaysian Investment Development Authority (Mida).

“The key drivers are largely structural. Labour shortages and rising costs are pushing companies to automate, while the need for higher productivity, consistent quality and more resilient supply chains is becoming increasingly important,” Sim notes. “At the same time, regional competition is accelerating adoption, as companies look to remain competitive in a more technology-driven manufacturing landscape.”

Evolution of the industrial property landscape

Rahim & Co Chestertons real estate agency director Siva Shanker says there is no rush to adopt AI and automation systems, largely owing to the varying nature of the

current industrial property types.

“The industrial sector is split into three clear categories: factories, warehouses and now data centres. Data centres, I think, are now fully AI, automated and intelligent. They run robustly, managing everything from electricity to water,” he adds.

Siva points out that, at the most basic level, a warehouse is essentially a “tin shed” — favoured by developers for its simplicity to build. However, this landscape is changing.

“The warehouses of today have evolved and become very automated and AI-driven. There are some warehouses where inside, it’s pitch black. There’s no light because they are fully automated and run by machines. The human element is nowhere to be seen,” says Siva.

The growing trend of AI and automation in the industrial sector can be seen regionally. According to JLL Malaysia’s data, this trend is growing in Asia-Pacific (Apac) and it is making its way to Malaysia.

“Based on a JLL survey of the largest occupiers of logistics and industrial space in the Apac region, the intent to adopt technology is high — 62% of respondents indicated they plan to use smart technology in their businesses, and 54% said they plan to implement robotics and automation,” says JLL Malaysia head of research and consultancy Yulia Nikulicheva.

She explains that when it comes to implementation, equipment costs are a crucial factor, especially in Malaysia where labour costs are relatively low. “That said, it’s im-

portant to note that equipment costs have declined significantly. For example, industrial robot prices have dropped dramatically — more than sixfold over the past 20 years.”

Government support

While the adoption of AI is not as widespread yet, the Malaysian government is ensuring that companies are not left behind as the world moves in that direction by supporting the use of technology in the industrial sector to boost production.

Sim highlights several comprehensive policies and incentives that encourage the adoption of AI and automation such as the New Industrial Master Plan 2030 (NIMP 2030) and the recent New Incentive Framework, which was announced in Budget 2025.

“Under NIMP 2030, existing manufacturers that reinvest or move into higher-value activities can benefit from incentives such as Investment Tax Allowances, which are tied to outcomes like Industry 4.0 adoption, R&D and the creation of higher-skilled jobs. Similarly, initiatives like Mida’s Automation Project Initiative have helped facilitate access to automation solutions and increased awareness of available support programmes,” he says.

“More recently, the Malaysia Digital incentives introduced in 2024 have taken a more outcome-based approach, encouraging companies to adopt enabling technologies such as AI, IoT and robotics as part of their operational transformation,” he adds.

Sim says it is too early to tell how effec-

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“Focus on building for adaptability, not just for today's demand. The right fundamentals will determine whether an asset remains competitive in a more technology-driven industrial landscape.”
— Sim, Knight Frank Malaysia

“The market is shifting, and while it's expensive to be an early adopter, it might be even more expensive to be left behind.”
— Siva, Rahim & Co Chestertons

“Based on a JLL survey of the largest occupiers of logistics and industrial space in the Apac region, the intent to adopt technology is high.”
— Nikulicheva, JLL Malaysia

“Successful facilities will deploy AI for specific high-value tasks while humans handle variability, exceptions and strategic decisions.”
— Rix, JLL PDS, SEA and Korea

tive these policies are but there are early signs of positive traction on a macro level.

“Malaysia is increasingly positioning itself as a digital investment hub, with Mida and Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation reportedly facilitating significant digital investments of about RM373.8 billion recently, while the growth in data centre and AI-related infrastructure — including large-scale investments by global technology players — points to strengthening investor confidence,” he says.

Similarly, Nikulicheva highlights how Budget 2025 has special policies and incentives for developers to adopt automation features.

“This initiative has encouraged developers to embrace smart technology in their projects. After launching its first flagship fully automated warehouse project, OMEGA Bukit Raja, ALP (Ally Logistic Property) has already commenced development of another facility,” she says.

According to its website, ALP Global builds and operates smart warehousing facilities designed for enterprise-scale supply chains. OMEGA 1 Bukit Raja is the region's largest facility of its kind, offering both ambient and cold chain capability under integrated automation.

Changes in the industry

The upfront AI and automation investment required could be a hindrance. While some might see it as a good thing, the initial spend is very high to set up the infrastruc-

ture and components needed for the use of AI or automation.

“The main benefit is cost savings in the long run. But that's also a con as you don't see results immediately,” Siva explains.

On top of that, Sim notes that workforce dynamics will shift. Where once factories were labour-intensive but with AI and automating processes, there would be a reduction in the number of staff needed. However, the challenge now is ensuring sufficient supply of good talent for everything to run smoothly.

According to JLL PDS, SEA and Korea head of data centres Jamex Rix, the role of workers will change.

“Role transformation affects most workers who remain [in the company]. Assembly line operators increasingly monitor AI systems, address exceptions that AI cannot handle and perform quality verification. These roles require more cognitive skills and less physical repetitions. Initial transitions create stress as workers adapt to new responsibilities,” says Rix.

He adds that skill requirements will shift upwards across most positions and new job categories may appear such as AI trainer and data annotation specialist.

Beyond the people, another constraint that Sim sees is the limitation of physical buildings. “From a real estate perspective, the main challenge lies in existing building stock. Many older factories were not designed to support automation, whether in terms of ceiling height, power capacity

or layout, making retrofitting both complex and costly. This has led to a growing preference for newer, purpose-built facilities that are better suited for AI and automation.”

One way around the “old” building situation, according to Nikulicheva, is to redevelop industrial property to cater for the new AI and automation demand. “Due to the relatively lower construction costs for logistics and industrial assets, developers are applying this redevelopment approach in prime locations where land values have increased dramatically over the past five years.”

Adding to this, Sim highlights environmental, social and governance (ESG) compliance, especially in the use of electricity and water, as something companies are particular about and this can impact the bottom line of property owners.

“There is a growing emphasis on ESG considerations, especially among MNC (multinational corporation) occupiers, where requirements around energy efficiency, water management and sustainability features are becoming increasingly important. Retrofitting to meet these standards can add further complexity and costs,” he points out.

Siva concurs, adding that with ESG considerations, AI may be used to help regulate the building, which is similar to what office buildings are doing. However, he stresses that the clincher is the hefty upfront cost, which does not necessarily translate into good returns through higher rental.

Developing an ESG-compliant building is expensive, says Siva, and maintaining it requires ongoing annual costs. Even if the rent is raised slightly, it may not be worth it after all, he asserts.

The next question is, if the industrial parks of the future become “smart” and are operated using AI and automation, will this make existing products obsolete?

According to Sim, it is not a matter of obsolescence, but market segmentation. “The rise of smart factories is not making older industrial parks obsolete. But it is creating a clearer segmentation in the market. Well-located, established parks with strong fundamentals, such as good connectivity, infrastructure and access

to labour, remain highly relevant and continue to attract corporate occupiers.”

That said, Sim warns that older parks will be under immense pressure as demand increases for newer AI- and automation-ready industrial properties, which typically command higher rents and transaction values.

“Companies that require such facilities are usually willing to pay a premium for buildings that can meet their operational needs, particularly where automation and efficiency are critical. That said, the pricing uplift is not driven by AI alone, but rather by the overall quality and readiness of the asset in supporting these technologies,” Sim notes.

Future outlook

As AI and automation slowly become the norm in most industrial parks, the outlook of experts is positive but with some caveats.

“The demand [for AI and automated buildings] is there, but the supply is slow to catch up because of cost factors,” says Siva. “However, as more MNCs move their operations here, they will expect these high-spec, AI-ready buildings.”

Siva foresees that developers who are building new supply without modern and smart integrations may struggle to find tenants in five to 10 years. “The market is shifting, and while it's expensive to be an early adopter, it might be even more expensive to be left behind.”

Meanwhile, JLL's Rix believes that the best way forward is a collaborative approach. “Hybrid intelligence becomes the operation model. Successful facilities will deploy AI for specific high-value tasks — quality inspection, predictive maintenance, process optimisation and supply chain coordination — while humans handle variability, exceptions and strategic decisions.”

To stay on track or to nose ahead, Sim says, “Focus on building for adaptability, not just for today's demand. The right fundamentals — power, infrastructure and digital connectivity, including access to data centre ecosystems where relevant — will determine whether an asset remains competitive in a more technology-driven industrial landscape.”

BEYOND INDUSTRIAL SPACE:

Why ecosystems are becoming the new competitive advantage



i-Park@Senai Airport City, an internationally recognised, well-managed integrated industrial park, redefined industrial development standards and attracted high-value industry investments

From engineering and construction to solar integration, AME delivers one-stop industrial solutions through LEED-certified, green-certified facilities for global manufacturers

By replicating AME's industrial expertise in Malaysia's key economic corridors, Northern TechValley@BKE delivers purpose-built facilities for evolving industries

All i-Parks offer workers' accommodation named i-Stay, which comes with in-house smart facilities and amenities

MALAYSIA'S INDUSTRIAL SECTOR is entering a new phase of growth.

For industrial occupiers today, the decision-making process extends beyond the specifications of a factory building or warehouse. Considerations such as energy readiness, workforce accommodation, operational efficiency, connectivity and long-term estate management are becoming increasingly important factors in determining where businesses choose to locate and expand.

Rather than simply delivering industrial space, developers are increasingly expected to provide integrated environments that support business operations over the long term. In this context, industrial development is becoming less about real estate and more about ecosystem creation.

Few Malaysian companies illustrate this transition as clearly as AME Elite Consortium Berhad.

FROM CONSTRUCTION ROOTS TO INDUSTRIAL ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Established more than three decades ago, AME's origins lie in engineering and construction. Over time, the group has expanded beyond its traditional roots to build an integrated platform that today encompasses industrial development, engineering and construction, renewable energy solutions, worker accommodation, property investment and industrial park management.

Today's industrial occupiers increasingly require a different approach. Businesses seek locations that can support operational continuity, workforce requirements, sustainability goals and future expansion plans.

AME's response has been to develop capabilities across multiple parts of the industrial value chain.

By integrating development, construction, energy solutions and estate management on a coordinated platform, the group is able to maintain greater oversight across the lifecycle of an industrial project. The objective is not merely to deliver industrial buildings, but to create operating environments that support industrial activity over the long term.

AME'S INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS REFLECT THIS SHIFT

Its projects incorporate sustainability considerations, renewable energy readiness and infrastructure planning that can support evolving industrial requirements. The company's engineering and construction background also influences its development philosophy, placing emphasis on practical functionality, build quality and operational efficiency.

The integration of worker accommodation in the broader ecosystem further reflects changing industry needs. Labour availability and workforce management remain key considerations for many manufacturers, particularly in labour-intensive sectors. Purpose-built accommodation and supporting facilities therefore have become an increasingly relevant component of industrial planning. Taken together, these elements represent a more comprehensive approach to industrial development — one that extends beyond the provision of factory space.

SCALING A PROVEN MODEL

A key challenge for any industrial developer is whether a successful model can be replicated across different markets.

For AME, Johor has served as both its foundation and proving ground.

The state remains one of Malaysia's most important manufacturing destinations, supported by strong logistics infrastructure, proximity to Singapore and a growing base of domestic and international investors. Over the years, the group has established several industrial developments in the state, including i-Park@Senai Airport City, i-Park@Indahpura, i-Park@SILC, i-TechValley, i-TechHub, SME City and District 6.

The success of these projects has provided a platform for broader expansion. Today, the company is extending its presence to other strategic industrial corridors across Peninsular Malaysia, with the objective of replicating a development model that has already been tested in one of the country's most competitive industrial markets.

POSITIONING IN MALAYSIA'S KEY GROWTH CORRIDORS

The expansion strategy focuses on regions that are expected to play increasingly important roles in Malaysia's industrial development agenda.

In Penang, AME has established Northern TechValley @ BKE, a 176-acre freehold integrated industrial development. The project marks the group's entry into northern Malaysia, home to one of Southeast Asia's most established E&E manufacturing ecosystems.

The northern region continues to attract investment from multinational corporations involved in semiconductor, electronics and advanced manufacturing activities. By entering this market, AME is positioning its industrial ecosystem model in a sector that remains central to Malaysia's export economy.

In the central region, the group's presence is represented by i-Park@Coalfields, a 151.2-acre freehold industrial development undertaken in partnership with KLK Land.

The project introduces AME's industrial development platform in Selangor, Malaysia's largest and most mature industrial market. For businesses operating in the Klang Valley and surrounding industrial zones, the development provides access to an integrated industrial environment supported by the group's wider ecosystem capabilities.

Viewed collectively, these projects represent more than geographical expansion. They signal the company's ambition to establish a national industrial platform spanning Malaysia's most important manufacturing and logistics corridors.

RECOGNITION BACKED BY EXECUTION

The group's growth has been accompanied by industry recognition.

AME Elite Group was named among Malaysia's Best Managed Companies 2025, reflecting strengths in areas such as strategy, governance, innovation and organisational capability. Its flagship development, i-Park@Senai Airport City, also received

international recognition when it secured the World Gold Winner in the Industrial Category at the FIABCI World Prix d'Excellence Awards 2023.

While awards alone do not define business success, such recognition provides external validation of the company's execution capabilities and development standards.

THE NEXT EVOLUTION OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Malaysia's industrial sector is expected to remain a key pillar of economic growth as investment continues to flow into manufacturing, technology, logistics and other high-value industries. As these sectors evolve, the demands placed on industrial infrastructure will become increasingly sophisticated. Occupiers are likely to place greater emphasis on locations that can support operational efficiency, workforce requirements, sustainability goals and future expansion in a single, coordinated environment.

Against this backdrop, the role of industrial developers is changing. Success will increasingly be measured not only by the amount of industrial space delivered, but also by the ability to create ecosystems that enable businesses to establish, operate and scale with confidence. This shift is reshaping industrial development from a property proposition to a long-term business enabler.

For AME, this evolution aligns with a strategy that has been decades in the making. From its beginnings as an engineering and construction specialist in Johor, the group has progressively built an integrated platform encompassing industrial development, renewable energy, worker accommodation, property investment and estate management. Its expansion to Penang and Selangor represents the next phase of that journey — extending a proven industrial ecosystem model to some of Malaysia's most strategic economic corridors.

As Malaysia enters a new phase of industrial growth, opportunities will increasingly favour businesses that can leverage well-planned, future-oriented industrial environments. Through its integrated approach and growing national footprint, AME aims to play a larger role in supporting the industries that will drive the country's next chapter of economic development.

To learn more about AME's industrial developments and integrated industrial ecosystem solutions, visit www.amedev.com.my or contact (607) 595 9999.



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Malaysia industrial and logistics spotlight: 1Q2026

Peninsular Malaysia's industrial hotspots — Penang, Greater Kuala Lumpur and Johor — offer competitive rental rates and excellent accessibility to key transport hubs. Here is a snapshot of what each centre provides, along with the industries currently operating there.

Penang



Stock

5.9 mil sq ft



Average Rent
(sqft/month)

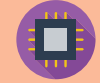
RM2.85 - RM3.50



Vacancy rate

5%

Key Sectors



Electrical &
Electronics



Logistics



Medical
products



Automation



Greater Kuala Lumpur



Stock

36.8 mil sq ft



Average Rent
(sqft/month)

RM2.18



Vacancy rate

6.6%

Key Sectors



Electrical &
Electronics



E-commerce
and logistics



Pharmaceutical
and
medical products



Automotive



Johor



Stock

-13 mil sq ft



Average Rent
(sqft/month)

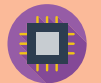
RM1.90 - RM2.50



Vacancy rate

2%-8%

Key Sectors



Electrical &
Electronics,
aerospace,
data centre
supply chain



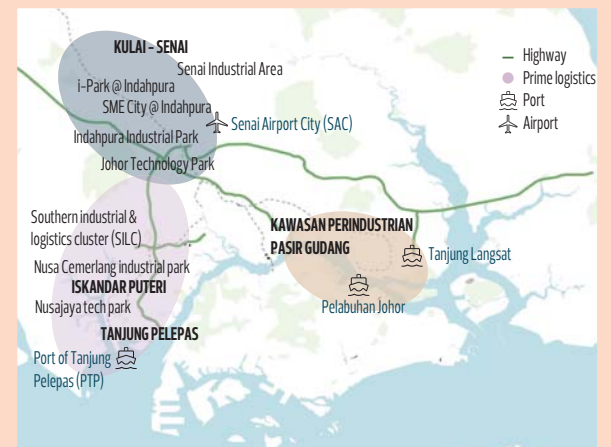
Logistics



Lifesciences
and medical



Oil
and gas



SOURCE: JLL MALAYSIA



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COVER STORY

From investment appetite to operational readiness

BY **RACHEL CHEW**
city.country@bizedge.com

The Malaysian industrial property market is transitioning from investment hype to a phase of normalisation, characterised by stable resilient growth rather than speculative volatility, according to real estate consultants.

While the overall industrial sector remains the strongest-performing real estate segment in Malaysia for now, the market is becoming increasingly value-led. Data from National Property Information Centre indicates that in 2025, transaction values for industrial properties surged by 21.3% despite relatively flat volumes growth of 1.4%, reflecting that buyers are prioritising larger, high-value and high-quality assets.

Warehouse-oriented properties continued to dominate the transaction activity across terraced, semi-detached and detached factory segments. This was followed by industrial land transactions, largely driven by the expansion of data centre developments.

While the number of unsold completed units remained stable, construction activity moderated likely due to existing oversupply. Nevertheless, planned incoming supply has nearly doubled, signalling continued developer confidence in this sector.

The strong segment momentum continued into the first quarter this year (1Q2026), supported by several notable transactions such as IOI Properties Group's (KL:IOIPG) deal with Bridge Data Centres at IOI Industrial Park in Banting, Selangor as well as the disposal of Quantum Edge Industrial Park in Kulai, Johor by Eco World Development Group Bhd (KL:ECOWLD) to a hyperscale data centre operator.

Overall, the segment outlook in 2026 remains positive among market players and consultants, underpinned by structural drivers like supply chain diversification under the China+1 strategy, as well as the rapid expansion of digital infrastructure.

Market experts also foresee that demand will be concentrated on modern, ESG-ready, Grade A facilities — particularly within the electrical and electronic (E&E), logistics and data centre sectors — while older, non-compliant estates face slower liquidity and pricing pressure.

Although challenges such as utility bottlenecks and talent shortages persist, the market's evolution towards operational delivery and high-specification (high-spec) infrastructure signals a maturing ecosystem built on real demand.

However, IVPS Group of Companies country manager Tiffany Goh highlights that the segment performance is becoming bifurcated while market demand remains robust.

"The sector is expected to remain the top-performing real estate segment, supported by ongoing demand from logistics, semiconductors and data centres, although transaction volumes may stay relatively subdued as investors become more selective amid tighter financing conditions and a stabilising macro environment," she says.

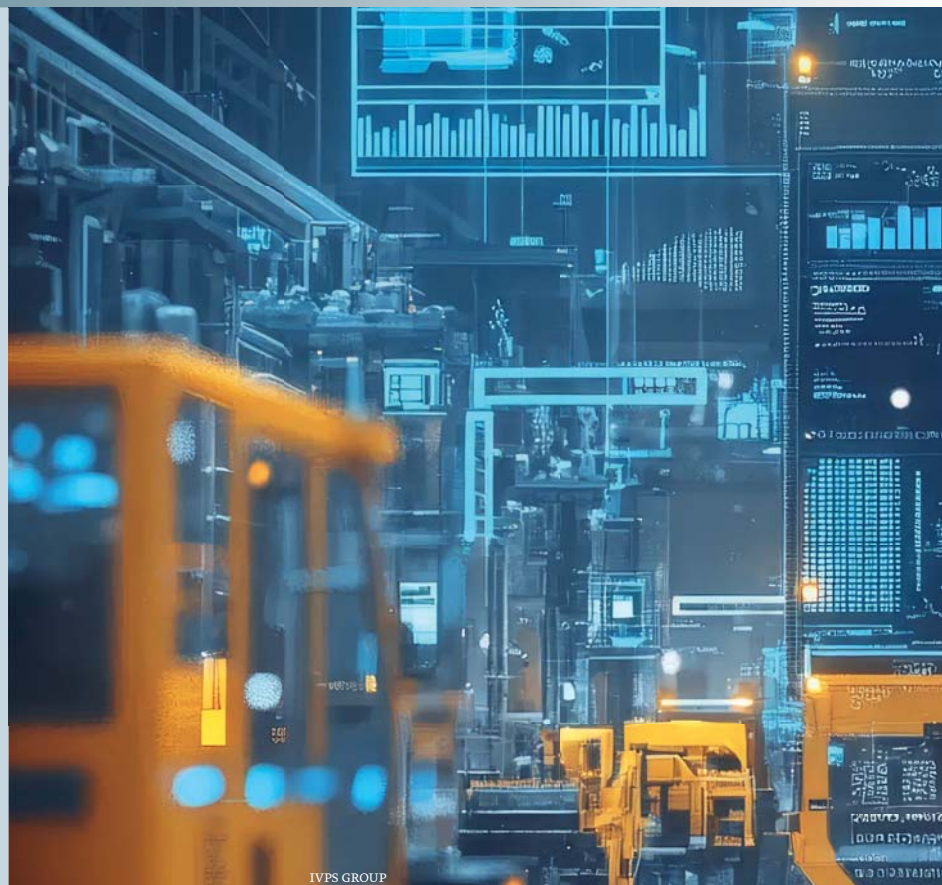
Looking ahead, Goh thinks the market will enter a phase of strategic consolidation, as investors pivot from speculative growth towards disciplined, infrastructure-led developments that meet stringent ESG standards.

"Capital values are likely to stay stable to slightly firm, but performance is becoming increasingly bifurcated between prime, high-spec assets, which will continue to outperform, while secondary stock may face slower absorption and pricing pressure. The outlook is for continued growth but at a more moderate and sustainable pace rather than another sharp jump," she notes.

Continued strong demand momentum

Zooming in on the prime industrial yields in Malaysia's five economic corridors — Iskandar Malaysia, Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER), East Coast Economic Region (ECER), Sabah Development Corridor (SDC) and Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (SCORE) — Goh shares that these have generally expanded to a range of 5.5% to 7.5% in 2025, compared with the 4.5% to 5.5% range in previous years, mainly due to higher interest rates and a broader repricing of assets, although underlying occupier demand remains strong.

"Core markets such as Greater Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Johor — especially the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone cluster — continue to see tighter yields at the lower end, while emerging corridors like ECER and Sabah and Sarawak offer higher



“Capital values are likely to stay stable to slightly firm, but performance is becoming increasingly bifurcated between prime, high-spec assets, which will continue to outperform ...”
— Goh, IVPS Group

yields reflecting increased risk and lower liquidity,” she elaborates.

Concurring with this, Henry Butcher Malaysia director of corporate real estate Long Shi Chuen points out that generally, the prime industrial yields in 2026 are, on average, 5% to 6%. However, he is convinced that this is mainly due to the limited quality stock available for prime industrial properties in the key economic zones.

"We see the sharpest yield in the Iskandar region and the Klang Valley, while Penang remains supported by the semiconductor supply chain. Interestingly, ECER, and Sabah and Sarawak have offered higher yields growth recently, reflecting the impact of the earlier-stage infrastructure improvements and its potential," he says.

Recent notable industrial development trends across Malaysia include the expansion of modern logistics hubs and multi-storey warehouses, as well as the rapid growth of industrial and data centre parks in Greater KL, particularly in Cyberjaya, KL and Puncak Alam; continued semiconductor-led industrial growth in the southern region such as Sedenak, Nusa Cemerlang Industrial and Nusajaya Tech Parks; elec-

tric vehicle (EV) and automotive expansion within Selangor and Negeri Sembilan; and resource- and energy-driven projects in Sarawak and Sabah. All of these highlight a market that is yielding higher returns supported by stronger structural demand.

Empowering data centres

While Johor is seen as the star of the data centre industry compared to other states, PA International Property Consultants Sdn Bhd group managing director Subramaniam Arumugam highlights some pitfalls as the market is transitioning from investment hype to operational delivery.

"In Johor, early signs of constraint have already been identified by the government, prompting a tightening of approval requirements, which now focus only on Tier 3 and Tier 4 data centres. This policy shift is largely driven by concerns over high water consumption, highlighting the potential challenges in supporting rapidly growing demand," he says.

Cyberjaya, on the other hand, is one of Malaysia's earliest and most established digital innovation hubs and its ecosystem was designed to support advanced technology infrastructure. As such, Subramaniam does not foresee power grid bottlenecks or water scarcity to be immediate. However, challenges may arise in the future as the availability of land, power and other resources become increasingly limited.

He explains that Tenaga Nasional Bhd (KL:TENAGA) has been continuously upgrading its grid capacity to support rising demand from data centres. Key initiatives such as the Green Lane Pathway aim to streamline and reduce electricity connection timelines for data centres while the expansion of renewable energy adoption is becoming an important part of supporting sustainable data centre growth.

The Green Lane Pathway is a strategic initiative launched by Tenaga in August 2023 to position Malaysia as a regional data centre hub. Its primary purpose is to simplify and accelerate the process of supplying power to data centre operators. By 2026, this pathway has become the standard for large-scale digital infrastructure investments in the country.

Subramaniam stresses that with demand



for data centres projected to hit 5,000MW by 2035, the Green Lane Pathway is the mechanism that will prevent physical bottlenecks in the power grid. It will ensure that Malaysia can attract massive capital from players like Microsoft, Google and Amazon while maintaining a healthy power reserve margin.

Adding to that, Henry Butcher Malaysia's Long says sustainability and stability of power and water supply are the biggest challenges for any data centre company looking to set up or expand their business, particularly in Cyberjaya and Johor.

"These are popular areas for data centre companies due to their infrastructure and the government incentives offered to data centres in the past few years. In the event that these areas are unable to sustain the required infrastructure demand for the data centre companies, operators will need to look for other areas in Malaysia to support their business needs," he notes.

Nonetheless, IVPS' Goh shares that as Malaysia's data centre boom shifts from approval to actual delivery in 2026, key execution risks for both Johor and Greater KL lie in the ability to secure approvals from relevant government agencies, such as the Data Centre Task Force (DCTF) and PLAN-Malaysia Johor, for construction as well as execution of power agreements.

"New electricity tariffs for the data centre category, which were introduced in July 2025, do have an impact on the overall profitability of the data centre players. In terms of water, the majority of the data centres have modified and adopted air-cooled or liquid cooling technology in the data centre construction, which saved on the water usage. This is required as part of the initiative to ensure that mass water is not used for cooling purposes," she explains.

Goh adds that data centre operators today have to ensure the design of the facility is for artificial intelligence (AI) and is sustainable in order to meet the requirements set by the Malaysian government.

Power and water aside, Subramaniam points out that one of the biggest concerns is actually talent availability.

"The rapid expansion of the data centre sector has outpaced the development of a sufficiently skilled workforce. Gaps exist across design, construction and operations,

as well as technical personnel supporting grid and utility infrastructure. This talent bottleneck could become a key limiting factor in sustaining the sector's long-term growth," he says.

Additional execution risks raised by Goh include stricter ESG compliance requirements, and broader infrastructure readiness, such as land servicing and environmental approvals, all of which are now being actively used to evaluate the data centre projects.

"In short, while capital and demand remain strong, the main risk to 2026's delivery is the ability to synchronise utilities, especially power and water, with construction timelines, making infrastructure readiness the primary bottleneck rather than investment appetite," she reckons.

International competition edge

While recognising that hyperscale digital investments are a cyclical rising star, the government is actively leveraging this momentum to cross-pollinate other high-growth sectors.

By maintaining a diversified foreign direct investment (FDI) intake, the government seeks to mitigate the volatility of any single industry, ensuring that the infrastructure upgrades currently being fast-tracked for data centres eventually serve as a robust foundation for a much broader industrial renaissance.

With this, Goh is confident that by focusing on higher-value, sector-driven clusters and a diversified FDI base, coupled with the strong support by agencies such as the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) and policies under the New Industrial Master Plan (NIMP) 2030, Malaysia has well positioned its industrial parks to capture supply chain diversification, particularly for industries like E&E, semiconductors, EV supply chains and data centres from the US, Europe, Japan, South Korea and China.

"Compared to regional peers, Malaysia's strengths lie in its mature industrial ecosystem, skilled workforce, strong infrastructure and regulatory transparency," she says. "But it faces challenges from lower-cost competitors such as Vietnam and Indonesia, as well as scalability constraints



Talent bottleneck could become a key limiting factor in sustaining the [data centre] sector's long-term growth."

– Subramaniam,
PA International

in land and utilities, while also competing with Singapore for high-end investments."

Building on this sentiment, Long emphasises that Malaysia's value proposition is increasingly shifting from a low-cost destination to a high-reliability partner. While peers like Vietnam and Thailand continue to attract labour-intensive assembly due to lower wage overheads (Vietnam's economy is projected to grow by over 8% in 2026), Malaysia is carving out a niche in complex manufacturing where its deep E&E ecosystem and widespread English proficiency are non-negotiable assets for global firms.

"The country is competing on quality, stability and ecosystem depth rather than cost, which supports diversified inflows but requires continued improvements in infrastructure delivery and policy execution," he shares.

To maintain its edge, Long suggests that the "Fast Lane" initiatives that were successful in Johor and Kedah become the national standard, ensuring that bureaucratic speed matches the country's ambitious policy targets under the NIMP 2030.

HENRY BUTCHER MALAYSIA



Investors should be wary of industrial parks without anchor demand ... overly optimistic rent assumptions, financially stretched developers ..."

– Long,
Henry Butcher Malaysia

Local fears

While there is strong demand for facilities to house data centres and related activities, the same cannot be said for all industrial property types. Long points out that there is a growing risk of oversupply in standard terraced factory units in some secondary locations as there is insufficient demand for either end users or the rental market to absorb.

"Investors should be wary of industrial parks without anchor demand, weak pre-commitments, overly optimistic rent assumptions, financially stretched developers and sites where utilities, access and drainage are not fully secured," he shares.

Meanwhile, older, non-ESG-compliant industrial estates also face challenges when it comes to increasing their value, especially if building owners are using the property for refinancing purposes as financing terms become less favourable and when investors price in obsolescence when it comes to acquisition. Still, there is a silver lining.

"Interestingly, a niche but growing retrofit market has emerged, where funds and private investors acquire older assets at a discount and upgrade them. This is often supported by green financing schemes if the location fundamentals of the building or asset are still strong," Long says.

Subramaniam highlights that when supply in newer areas tightens and pricing escalates, occupiers and investors tend to shift their attention back to well-located but ageing industrial estates.

"At that point, retrofitting becomes a more viable strategy [than investing in new facilities in decentralised areas]. Although it requires additional capital expenditure, it is often still more cost-effective than acquiring new assets in high-demand locations, especially for local SMEs (small and medium enterprises)," he shares.

SMEs that need to comply with ESG requirements will have little choice but to move into newer, ESG-ready environments, including managed industrial parks, to save on the hefty retrofitting cost. However, he says, the majority of SMEs in Malaysia still tend to delay ESG adoption due to the higher operating costs involved.

"As a result, the trend of many SMEs opting out of managed industrial parks and moving to older, well-located industrial areas with strong connectivity, or

CONTINUES ON PAGE SR14

NOTABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN MALAYSIA'S ECONOMIC ZONES

3. NORTHERN REGION

Spanning Penang and Kedah, this region is evolving from backend assembly to frontend design and cross-border trade

KEY PROJECTS AND DEVELOPMENTS:

Batu Kawan Industrial Park (BKIP)

With BKIP 1 saturated, BKIP 2 and BKIP 3 are the new frontiers. Despite some requests for proposal revisions in early 2026, the area continues to attract silicon carbide and gallium nitride semiconductor players.

NCT InnoSphere

Launched in September 2025, this RM1.1 billion project in the Delapan Special Border Economic Zone (SBEZ) is a critical cross-border land gateway. It serves as a consolidation and light-assembly hub for the RM70 billion annual border trade with Thailand.

Kulim Hi-Tech Park (KHTP)

The country's first high-tech industrial park is seeing massive reinvestment from Infineon and Ferrotec in power semiconductors.

1. CENTRAL REGION

This zone has shifted towards high-density, ESG-compliant infrastructure to overcome land scarcity and meet the needs of global e-commerce

KEY PROJECTS AND DEVELOPMENTS:

E-Metro Logistics Park in Bukit Raja

A flagship RM1 billion joint venture between Sime Darby Property Bhd (KL:SIMEPROP) and LOGOS Property. As of 2026, Metrohub 1 and 2 are major operational nodes for third-party logistics providers like J&T, featuring multi-storey designs and LEED Gold sustainability.

NCT Smart Industrial Park (NSIP)

Located in Sepang, this is Malaysia's first certified managed industrial park, with Phase 1 reaching vacant possession in late 2025/early 2026

Negeri Sembilan

Hosting the RM1 billion Auto City and new manufacturing plants like Otafuku Sauce and Exis Tech (opened in December 2025).

Selangor

Acting as the primary site for local electric vehicle (EV) assembly (for example, Chery) and localised production of EV chargers (for example, Swift Bridge Technologies' RM11 million facility).

4. SARAWAK + 5. SABAH

Both states have pivoted from raw commodity exports to becoming the "Battery of Asean" through green energy

KEY PROJECTS AND DEVELOPMENTS:

Bintulu

The H2biscus and H2ornbill green hydrogen projects are in advanced stages, positioning Sarawak as a global supplier of clean fuel to North Asia.

Samalaju Industrial Park

Focusing on green steel and energy-intensive manufacturing powered by Sarawak's vast hydroelectric resources. TotalEnergies and InvestSarawak recently deepened cooperation on carbon capture, utilisation and storage as well as sustainable aviation fuel.

2. SOUTHERN REGION

Johor is currently the primary beneficiary of the "Singapore Plus One" strategy, particularly within the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone

KEY PROJECTS AND DEVELOPMENTS:

Sedenak Tech Park (STeP)

The largest data centre hub in Malaysia (745 acres). In March 2026, it was confirmed as the nation's premier digital cluster with power capacity reaching 600MW.

YTL Data Centre campus

A unique 275-acre park integrated with a 500MW solar farm in Kulai. The 2024/25 partnership with Nvidia has successfully established this as an AI-ready sovereign cloud hub in 2026.

Nusa Cemerlang and Nusajaya Tech Park

Continued expansion in Nusa Cemerlang and Nusajaya Tech Park by UEM Sunrise Bhd (KL:UEMS), it now hosts a high concentration of advanced precision engineering and electronics firms.

Local SMEs increasingly priced out of newer developments

FROM PAGE SR13

choosing stratified industrial units that are more affordable and better suited to smaller-scale operations, is growing in the local SME market," he shares.

As for the prospect of managed industrial parks, which have mushroomed in recent years, but with the market cautious on the supply-demand mismatch, Subramaniam is unperturbed as one of the key elements of such a product is building a comprehensive ecosystem, not solely on the industrial product itself.

"Managed industrial parks typically comprise a range of components, which include industrial plots, terraced, semidee and detached factories, CLQ (centralised labour quarters), as well as supporting commercial units such as shopoffices. Some even come with a small number of residential components. They are designed to be a self-sustaining ecosystem.

"These remain largely concentrated in Selangor due to popular demand, with recent spillover into Negeri Sembilan, supported by Malaysia Vision Valley 2.0. Also, developers typically launch these parks in phases, allowing them to respond to actual market demand and adjust product offerings over time," he shares.

Rather than worrying about the oversupply and influx of incoming supply, Subramaniam is more interested in how the industrial park will be managed after vacant

possession, specifically, who the property manager is and how effective they will be in maintaining the park's standards over time to ensure long-term competitiveness.

"This is important because managed industrial parks typically involve ongoing maintenance fees, which represent an additional cost compared to traditional industrial estates. Another red flag is the unclear value proposition of managed industrial parks ... the concept is still relatively new and not fully understood by the market at large," he notes.

The first certified Managed Industrial Parks (MIP) in Malaysia is the NCT Smart Industrial Park (NSIP) undertaken by NCT Alliance Bhd (KL:NCT). It is located in the Integrated Development Region in South Selangor (IDRISS) and the first phase, which consists of 270 detached, semidee and link factories, alongside 10 industrial plots, is said to be completed and in the midst of gradually handing over vacant possession.

Sharing Subramaniam's sentiments, Goh is concerned about the quality of management and maintenance of the newer higher-maintenance-cost managed industrial parks, with some SMEs currently adopting a wait-and-see approach even though they can afford the upgrade.

However, in reality, a substantial number of SMEs are being priced out of these products.

"Amid the surge of large-scale, high-spec

managed industrial parks, many local SMEs are increasingly being priced out of newer developments, as land and building costs, service charges and compliance requirements push occupancy costs beyond what smaller operators can sustain. This is especially evident in prime corridors such as the Klang Valley and Johor, where managed industrial parks are geared towards multinational tenants and high-growth sectors.

"As a result, SMEs are gravitating towards older industrial estates, secondary locations or fringe areas where entry costs are lower, including parts of Selangor outside core logistics hubs, Negeri Sembilan, and northern Johor, while some are opting for sub-leasing, smaller strata units or refurbishing existing premises instead of relocating to new parks," she says.

This shift is creating two tiers in the local market, Goh adds, where modern parks cater to capital-intensive users and foreign investors, while SMEs remain active in more affordable, less-specification-driven spaces, although Goh believes this may gradually widen the gap in productivity and competitiveness if smaller firms are unable to access upgraded infrastructure and facilities.

While more industrial property developers are launching new parks to capture the overall strong demand for such product, she also highlights that many new projects still lack the specifications required by modern occupiers — such as high power capacity,

large floor plates, higher ceiling heights and ESG compliance — which is making demand more selective and leaving conventional formats more exposed to slower take-up and pricing pressures.

Some of the biggest red flags investors should watch for, Goh says, are rising vacancy or slower absorption in new schemes, especially in secondary locations; speculative developments without pre-commitments; uncertain utility readiness such as power and water; overly aggressive pricing assumptions; and clusters of similar, undifferentiated projects within the same area. In her view, all of these could signal future supply-demand imbalance despite an overall positive market outlook.

Conclusion

The industrial property market in Malaysia is still active and growing. However, gaps in the market are evident, whether these are in managed industrial parks or older industrial estates. Potential investors need to weigh all considerations to ensure a positive outcome in this sector.



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ECERDC CHAMPIONING EAST COAST TRANSFORMATION FROM EXOTIC CHARMS TO ECONOMIC PIVOTS

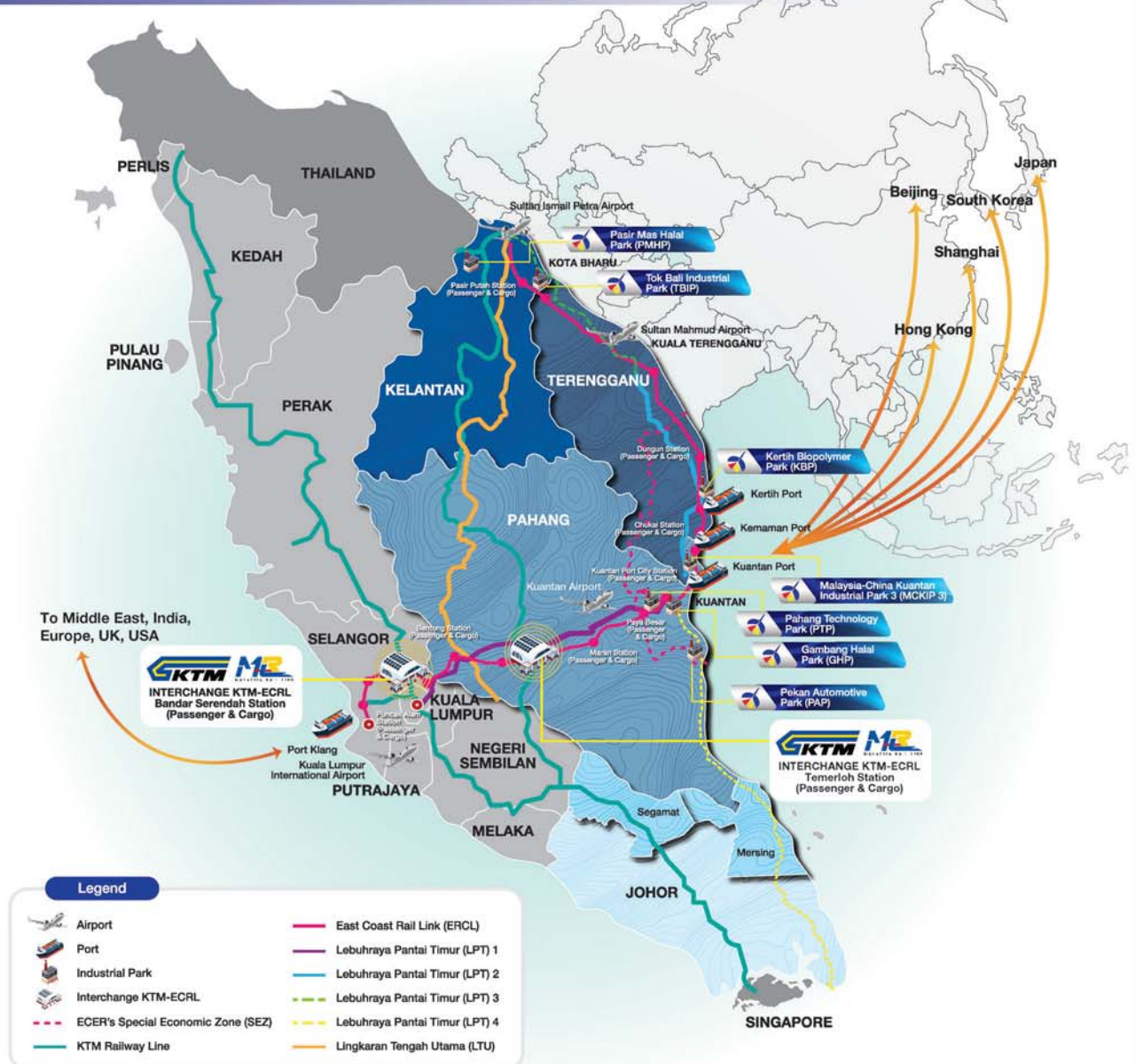


For decades, Malaysia's East Coast has been renowned for its natural beauty, rich cultural heritage and traditional industries. Today, however, the region is emerging as a key driver of Malaysia's industrial growth, attracting high-value investments and strengthening the country's manufacturing base.

Spanning Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, as well as Mersing and Segamat in Johor, the East Coast Economic Region (ECER) covers more than 69,000 sq km, or 52% of Peninsular Malaysia, and is home to over five million people. Driving this transformation is the East Coast Economic Region Development Council (ECERDC), which is mandated to spearhead the region's socio-economic development.

From 2018 to 2025, ECER recorded RM54.8 billion in realised investments, achieving 112% of its target and surpassing the original target of RM49 billion. These investments have generated over 82,000 jobs and more than 25,000 entrepreneurial opportunities, reflecting growing investor confidence in the region and reinforcing ECER's position as one of Malaysia's key investment growth corridors.

At the core of ECERDC's strategy is the development of seven thematic industrial parks designed to attract specialised, high-value industries. Together, these industrial hubs form an integrated ecosystem supported by modern infrastructure, strategic logistics connectivity and investor-ready facilities, creating a seamless value chain from upstream production to downstream manufacturing across sectors ranging from advanced manufacturing, automotive and petrochemicals to halal products, technology, logistics and bio-based industries.



Industrial Parks

Industrial Park	Acreage	Key Industries
Tok Bali Industrial Park (TBIP), Kelantan	145 acres	Manufacturing, construction materials, metal fabrication, edible oils, marine-related industries
Pasir Mas Halal Park (PMHP), Kelantan	108 acres	Halal manufacturing, agro-based industries, warehousing, logistics and cross-border trade
Kertih Biopolymer Park (KBP), Terengganu	640 acres	Specialty chemicals, bio-based products, green industries, downstream oil & gas services, renewable energy
Malaysia-China Kuantan Industrial Park (MCKIP), Pahang	2,830 acres	Advanced manufacturing, steel, petrochemicals, specialty chemicals, advanced materials, electrical & electronics, renewable energy
Pekan Automotive Park (PAP), Pahang	237 acres	Automotive assembly, components manufacturing, electric and hybrid vehicles, commercial vehicles, R&D
Gambang Halal Park (GHP), Pahang	169 acres	Halal food & beverage, non-food consumer products, processing, logistics and distribution
Pahang Technology Park (PTP), Pahang	149 acres	Data centres, medical devices, fulfilment hubs, digital services, light and medium industries



Malaysia-China Kuantan Industrial Park (MCKIP) continues to drive industrial growth in ECER, attracting high-value investments and advanced manufacturing industries.

The attractiveness of ECER's industrial ecosystem is further enhanced by strategic infrastructure assets such as Kuantan Port, Kertih Port and the upcoming East Coast Rail Link (ECRL), which will improve logistics efficiency, strengthen supply chain integration and provide greater access to domestic and international markets.

Through strategic planning and cohesive execution, ECERDC is transforming Malaysia's East Coast into a competitive and specialised investment destination. As industries continue to seek resilient supply chains and strategic regional locations, ECER offers investors a compelling platform for long-term growth, connectivity and expansion in the Asia-Pacific region.



Malaysia's CLQ gold rush

BY **RACHEL CHEW**
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Centralised labour quarters (CLQ) are emerging as a shining beacon in the property market, driven by the government's end-2027 deadline to completely phase out temporary labour quarters (TLQ).

TLQ, which came into effect on January 2024, were introduced by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (KPKT) to standardise foreign workers' accommodation. Under the guidelines, TLQ permits are valid for a maximum of three years, with the absolute final operational deadline for all permits to end on Dec 31, 2027, and be replaced permanently by CLQ.

According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), the total foreign worker population in the country stood at about 2.51 million as at 4Q2025. In contrast, Certificate of Accommodation (COA) approvals under the Workers' Minimum Standards of Housing and Amenities Act 1990 (Act 446) covered just over 355,000 workers as at January 2026. This exposes an astonishing reality that millions of workers are left stranded in non-certified quarters or converted residential units that are now facing a rapid policy-driven countdown to a legal shutdown.

"Only about 14% of the foreign workforce is currently housed in formally approved and compliant accommodation, with the majority still residing in non-certified or employer-managed premises. As the government plans to phase out TLQ by end-2027, this gap is expected to widen in the near term, indicating a significant structural undersupply of compliant worker housing that accelerates demand for CLQ," says CBRE | WTW group managing director Tan Ka Leong.

This high-stakes supply gap is no longer just a regulatory headache, but has evolved into a goldmine for savvy property investors. Tan points out that the pressure to comply with the razor-sharp environmental, social and governance (ESG) audits globally, which have resulted in multinational buyers flatly refusing to purchase products from local manufacturers who house their workers poorly, are turning institutional-grade CLQ into defensive investment darlings.

"In the current 2026 market, stable and regulatory-compliant CLQ assets typically generate net yields of about 5% to 7%. This places them broadly in line with industrial assets, at around 5.5% to 8%, and slightly above commercial assets, about 4% to 6.5%. CLQ assets are increasingly emerging as a niche but growing real estate asset class, sitting between the industrial property and purpose-built accommodation segments," he says.

Tan says the current investment appeal of CLQ is driven less by yield outperformance and more by income stability, underpinned by regulatory-backed demand and long-term occupancy requirements.

Zerin Properties founder and group CEO Previndran Singhe says CLQ, which provide stable yields, are increasingly being recognised as an emerging asset class that attracts major institutional capital.

"From an investment standpoint, CLQ are increasingly viewed as a defensive, income-generating asset class. High occupancy levels, long-term lease structures and stable demand have attracted institutional capital and more industry activity," he adds.

For example, Retirement Fund Inc



i-Stay in i-Park@Indahpura is an award-winning CLQ in Kulai, Johor

SAM FONG/THE EDGE



“Only about 14% of the foreign workforce is currently housed in formally approved and compliant accommodation, with the majority still residing in non-certified or employer-managed premises.” – Tan, CBRE | WTW

(KWAP) announced that it would acquire two purpose-built workers' accommodation (PBWA) in Penang and Johor from Singapore-based industry player Centurion Corp Ltd for RM227 million and lease them back as part of its long-term investment portfolio. The 15-year leaseback arrangements will support stable yield profiles in the mid-6% to 7% range.

"Overall, the market is moving beyond compliance. CLQ are becoming part of how industries plan, operate and future-proof their workforce, supported by ESG alignment, institutional capital and more structured workforce and planning frameworks," says Previndran.

Resistance and limits to growth

While the CLQ market is growing fast due to the combination of policy enforcement, industrial expansion and capital inflows, it is facing several structural and operational challenges.

"One of the most persistent challenges

is community resistance — the NIMBY (not in my backyard) concerns," says Previndran. "Large-scale CLQ developments have faced pushback in several locations, particularly in Penang, where proposed projects have triggered public opposition over concerns about congestion, safety and social impact. In some cases, the authorities have signalled that licences could be revoked if developments create public nuisance, underscoring the importance of proper planning, location selection and community engagement."

Another key challenge is the cost of compliance, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). He explains that developing or leasing compliant accommodation requires significant capital outlay and, while shared CLQ models are emerging, affordability remains a constraint for smaller manufacturers.

"This creates a reliance on third-party operators and centralised facilities, which may not always be available at scale," he notes.

There has also been a structural shift in labour dynamics, where the government's efforts to reduce dependence foreign workers through automation and local workforce participation could moderate long-term demand growth.

"In fact, this is already reflected in the decline in foreign worker population following tighter policies. However, in the near to medium term, the existing compliance gap remains substantial and the demand for compliant accommodation is expected to remain strong," says Previndran.

CBRE | WTW's Tan says on top of this, the growing adoption of automation and artificial intelligence (AI) in manufacturing

may gradually reduce the demand for low-skilled labour in certain segments over time. As such, he foresees that the CLQ model in Malaysia may evolve beyond just basic dormitory accommodation in the future and towards more integrated and professionally managed living environments, particularly in larger industrial corridors.

"This evolution is being driven by regulatory enforcement, ESG expectations and the continued reliance on labour-intensive industries, all of which are raising baseline standards for workers' accommodation. In more advanced developments, CLQ are likely to incorporate support services such as basic healthcare facilities, digital administration systems, cashless payment platforms and improved transport coordination," he says.

Tan expects that over time, there will be greater integration of amenities supporting liveability and workforce retention, including food and retail services, recreation facilities and improved connectivity infrastructure.

"However, this transformation will remain uneven. Larger institutional developments are expected to lead, while smaller projects will remain primarily compliance-focused," he says.

Where are the hotspots?

When asked about hotspots, Tan points out that the central region has seen rapid growth of CLQ developments in recent years.

"In the Klang Valley, particularly Klang and Kuala Langat, there is a high concentration of CLQ developments in the pipeline, collectively adding around 78,000 beds. This reflects a shift towards master-planned, industrial park-integrated accommodation



Some of the better CLQ provide residents with amenities such as a laundrette and convenience store

PICTURES BY AME DEVELOPMENT



SAM FONG/THE EDGE

CLQ are expected to become a more institutionalised part of Malaysia's industrial infrastructure, anchored by structural labour demand and long-term industrial development needs."

— Previndran, Zerín Properties

models driven by manufacturing clusters and broader industrial expansion," he says.

In Penang, particularly in the Seberang Perai industrial corridor, the CLQ market is underpinned by a strong base of electrical and electronics (E&E) manufacturing activity, says Tan. Several planned and under-construction developments will collectively add more than 41,000 beds in the corridor, reflecting continued institutional expansion aligned with the growth of the semiconductor and E&E sector. This pipeline supports the underlying demand for CLQ accommodation in the region.

Down south in Johor, in the Iskandar Malaysia and the Pengerang-Pasir Gudang corridor, about 11,000 beds have been identified, aligned with the growth of manufacturing, logistics and petrochemical industries, with additional support from longer-term initiatives such as the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ), which is expected to further strengthen industrial and labour demand in the southern region.

Tan highlights that in Kedah, particularly the Kulim Hi-Tech Park (KHTP), there are CLQ projects in the pipeline that will offer about 24,000 beds, supported by multiple existing projects in the industrial park and surrounding areas.

"This development pipeline is further reinforced by recent regulatory measures, including restrictions on the use of residential premises for foreign workers' accommodation from Jan 1, 2026, under local authority enforcement aligned with Act 446 standards, which is expected to accelerate demand for compliant, purpose-built workers' housing in the area," he says.

In Sarawak, particularly the Bintulu-Samalaju industrial corridor, the market reflects a more mixed supply-demand dynamic.

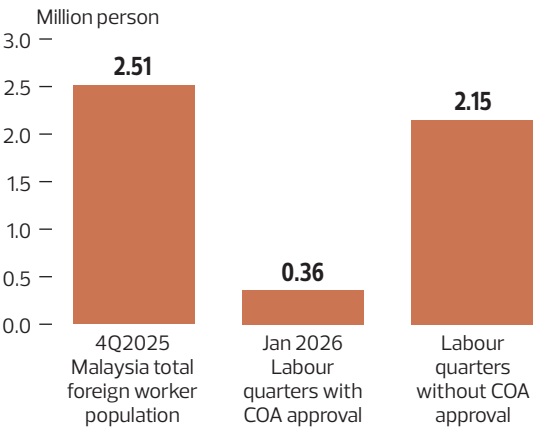
"Large-scale PBWA already exists in the Kidurong Light Industrial Estate, including facilities spanning over 26ha with more than 60 accommodation blocks. However, portions of this stock remain underutilised, suggesting that constraints are not purely supply-driven, but also linked to accessibility, tenancy structure and allocation models," says Tan.

"In contrast, privately operated CLQ-style developments in the Samalaju area are reporting occupancy levels of above 80%, indicating strong underlying demand where accommodation is structured for broader access."

MALAYSIA'S CLQ MARKET AT A GLANCE



Malaysia's foreign worker population vs approved labour quarters capacity (4Q2025/Jan 2026)



SOURCE: CBRE | WTW / DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS MALAYSIA

Notable CLQ pipeline developments

DEVELOPMENT	LOCATION	ESTIMATED NO OF BEDS
NCT Smart Industrial Park	Kuala Langat, Selangor	30,000
Q Central @ Teratai	Klang, Selangor	9,000
Q Central @ NorthPort	Klang, Selangor	8,200
AA Dorm (Permatang Tinggi)	Seberang Perai, Penang	9,100
Dorm by Urban Pinnacle Sdn Bhd	Seberang Perai, Penang	8,400

Note: The table represents selected major CLQ developments and does not reflect the full national pipeline

SOURCE: CBRE | WTW

Key differences between CLQ and PBWA

FEATURES	CLQ	PBWA
Regulatory compliance	Explicitly regulated under Act 446, with strict design and operational standards	Regulated under Act 446 only if used to house foreign workers. Higher-end PBWA may fall outside the Act.
Licensing and approval	Must obtain Certificate of Accommodation from the Labour Department (JTK)	Must obtain Certificate of Accommodation if housing foreign workers. Otherwise, licensing depends on local regulations.
Design and space requirements	Standardised design: Minimum 3 sq m per worker in dormitories, 3.6 sq m per worker in non-dormitories, specific hygiene and safety requirements	Flexible design: Must comply with Act 446 only if classified as workers' housing. Otherwise, designs may vary.
Location and land use	Typically located in industrial zones and built to house large workforces for multiple employers	Can be located in industrial, commercial or mixed-use developments, offering more customised housing solutions
Ownership and management	Often developed and managed by industrial park developers or third-party operators, catering to multiple employers	Can be employer-owned, privately developed or part of mixed-use industrial developments
Investment appeal	Increasingly attractive to institutional investors and REITs due to stable, long-term leases and regulatory demand	Also appeals to REITs and private investors, especially for higher-end workers' housing that offers more flexible leasing models

SOURCE: ZERIN PROPERTIES

Bright outlook

Looking further ahead to 2028 and beyond, Zerín Properties' Previndran foresees that the market is likely to become more segmented and sophisticated, where CLQ will become the default workers' accommodation in most industrial states, but with a clearer distinction between basic compliant facilities and more integrated, higher-quality developments.

"This is where differentiation really comes in. Factors such as ESG performance, operational quality and integration with industrial ecosystems will start to drive both rental premiums and valuation. At the same time, we will likely see more growth extending beyond traditional hotspots into emerging corridors like Kedah and the East Coast, as industrial activity becomes more decentralised," he says.

"Of course, there will be challenges to navigate. Community acceptance remains important and developers will need to be more thoughtful of how projects are planned and integrated."

On the market outlook in the near term, Previndran believes the industry is at an inflection point with "strongly positive" prospects, but points out that the market is also evolving quite quickly. He predicts that in 2026 and 2027, the transition away from TLQ and full enforcement under Act 446 will continue to drive strong demand for CLQ, which means that most compliant beds coming on the market are likely to be absorbed quickly, particularly in key industrial regions like the Klang Valley, Johor and Penang.

He also foresees occupancy levels remaining high as upward pressure on rental rates, especially for well-located, professionally managed facilities, is already reflected in the market.

"Well-managed assets typically command higher rental rates, with premium facilities achieving RM260 to RM350 per bed per month, compared with RM180 to RM250 for more basic accommodation. And they are still growing. Professionally managed CLQ can achieve valuation premiums in

the range of 15% to 25%, particularly where there is a proven track record in operations, compliance and tenant management," says Previndran, adding that professional facility management is increasingly a key determinant of both income performance and capital value.

Tan concurs, saying that professional facility management is a key value driver and that well-managed assets tend to achieve higher occupancy stability, lower turnover risk and stronger institutional acceptance, supporting more resilient long-term income performance.

"The market is expected to be more differentiated, with institutional-grade developments setting the benchmark for professionally managed accommodation, while smaller assets remain compliance-driven," he adds.

"Overall, CLQ are expected to become a more institutionalised part of Malaysia's industrial infrastructure, anchored by structural labour demand and long-term industrial development needs."

Building the next generation of industrial ecosystems

As global supply chains evolve, companies today are seeking integrated industrial ecosystems that can support long-term growth, operational efficiency, technological advancement and access to talent. In response to these evolving needs, industrial parks are being reimagined as strategic platforms that bring together infrastructure, connectivity, innovation and sustainability.

This shift is shaping the future of industrial real estate in Malaysia, particularly as the country positions itself to attract higher-value investments across manufacturing, technology and digital infrastructure. At the forefront of this transformation is Eco World Development Group Bhd (EcoWorld Malaysia) (KL:ECOWLD), which is advancing a new vision for industrial development through its EcoWorld Industrial Platform (EWIP).

Designed as a next-generation industrial ecosystem and wealth creation platform, EWIP seeks to serve a broad spectrum of businesses ranging from multinational corporations and manufacturers to logistics operators, technology companies, investors and digital infrastructure providers. More than a conventional industrial development, it represents a comprehensive approach to supporting businesses at every stage of their growth journey.

An exemplar of this is EcoWorld Malaysia's Eco Business Park (EBP) 7, the group's latest flagship industrial development.

Seizing opportunities in Malaysia's next industrial growth corridor

A key component of EcoWorld Malaysia's industrial strategy is its focus on emerging growth corridors that are expected to shape the country's next phase of economic expansion.

Among these is Malaysia Vision Valley (MVV) 2.0, a long-term development initiative aimed at transforming Negeri Sembilan into a major economic hub while strengthening connectivity with the Klang Valley and beyond.

Envisioned as a catalyst for industrial growth, investment attraction and job creation, MVV 2.0 is expected to unlock opportunities across manufacturing, logistics and technology-related sectors. As infrastructure improves and economic activity expands, businesses are increasingly looking at the corridor as a strategic location for future growth.

Anchoring EcoWorld Malaysia's presence within this emerging economic corridor is EBP 7. Located within MVV 2.0, the industrial park is designed to support the next wave of industrial expansion by offering businesses access to strategic connectivity and future-ready infrastructure.

The development enjoys accessibility to the Klang Valley, Port Klang and Kuala Lumpur International Airport while major highways including North-South Expressway, Kajang-Seremban Highway and North-South Expressway Central Link provide efficient connections to key markets and logistics networks.

For manufacturers, logistics operators and industrial users, these advantages can translate into operational efficiencies and stronger supply chain connectivity. More importantly, EBP 7 offers businesses the opportunity to establish an early presence within a corridor that is expected to see increasing investment and economic activity over time.



PICTURES BY ECOWORLD MALAYSIA

Eco Business Park 7 is designed to support the next wave of industrial growth with strategic connectivity and future-ready infrastructure



Factory units are designed with flexibility in mind, allowing businesses to scale their operations as their space requirements evolve

Flexible spaces for expanding businesses

As one of the current offerings within EBP 7, the developer's SME Core format is designed to cater to businesses seeking scalable industrial spaces within a master-planned ecosystem.

Built around a flexible-space concept, SME Core accommodates a range of operational requirements across manufacturing, warehousing, assembly, distribution, e-commerce fulfilment and corporate headquarters functions. The design allows businesses to adapt their premises as operational needs evolve.

Options available include cluster factories measuring 60ft by 120ft, with built-up areas of approximately 4,000 sq ft. Priced from RM2.4 million, these units provide an accessible entry point for growing businesses looking to establish operations within MVV 2.0.

For companies requiring greater operational capacity, semi-detached factories measuring 75ft by 140ft offer approximately 5,900 sq ft of built-up space, with prices starting from RM3.3 million. These units are designed to support larger-scale operations while providing enhanced loading capabilities and a stronger corporate presence.

The SME Core offering reflects broader trends in industrial occupier demand, where flexibility and room for future expansion are becoming increasingly important considerations in location and investment decisions.

Beyond industrial parks

EcoWorld Malaysia's EBP 7 showcases EWIP in action, where it meets the demand of industrial property that goes beyond just the basics of land availability, infrastructure and access to transportation networks. While these factors remain important, businesses today are increasingly looking for something more comprehensive.

As industries embrace digitalisation and global supply chains become more complex, companies are required to restructure how they operate.

As a result, the role of industrial parks has expanded beyond simply providing factory space. Increasingly, they are expected to function as integrated ecosystems where businesses can access infrastructure, talent, technology and supporting amenities within a single environment.

This shift is particularly relevant for Malaysia, which continues to attract investments in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, electrical and electronics (E&E), logistics and digital infrastructure. As competition for investments intensifies across the region, the quality of industrial ecosystems is becoming an increasingly important differentiator.

Against this backdrop, EWIP is ideally positioned to provide a next-generation industrial ecosystem designed to support businesses throughout their growth journey.

Rather than focusing solely on industrial real estate, EWIP also brings together manufacturing, logistics, technology and commercial components within master-planned developments. The objective is to create environments where companies can establish operations, scale efficiently and take advantage of emerging economic opportunities.

Strategic connectivity remains a key pillar of the platform. Developments within the EWIP portfolio are positioned to provide access to major highways, ports and airports, helping businesses move goods and people efficiently. In addition, they are designed to accommodate industries that are seen to drive future economic growth, including advanced manufacturing, logistics, technology and digital infrastructure.

Sustainability also forms a central tenet of the platform's planning philosophy.

As environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations become increasingly important to both investors and occupiers, industrial developments are expected to support greener and more resilient business operations. EWIP incorporates these principles into its planning framework, reflecting the growing demand for future-ready industrial environments.

Supporting Malaysia's growth sectors

Beyond connectivity and sustainability, another defining characteristic of EWIP is its ability to support a diverse range of industries.

The platform caters to sectors that are expected to play a significant role in Malaysia's economic development over the coming years. These include digital infrastructure and data centres; advanced manufacturing; E&E, logistics and warehousing; aerospace and engineering; life sciences; healthcare; halal manufacturing; as well as technology and innovation-based industries.

The diversity of industries reflects the changing nature of industrial demand. Manufacturing remains a critical pillar of the Malaysian economy but it is increasingly being complemented by technology-driven sectors that require specialised infrastructure and robust digital connectivity.

Data centres, for instance, have emerged as a major growth segment as cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI) and digital services continue to expand across the region. Malaysia's strategic location, improving digital ecosystem and supportive policies have enhanced its attractiveness as a destination for digital infrastructure investments.

Within EcoWorld Malaysia's industrial environment, a number of prominent global and regional players have already established a presence. These include major digital infrastructure operators and technology companies such as Microsoft, Google, PDG and AirTrunk, alongside manufacturers and industrial players including Baosteel, Haitian, Deye, Huirui, EB Frozen, SKB, Rurutiki, GoldenHome and Tayaria.

Their presence underscores the growing appeal of integrated industrial environments that are capable of supporting diverse operational requirements.

Positioning for the future

The future of industrial development is no longer defined solely by land, buildings or infrastructure. Increasingly, success will depend on how effectively businesses can connect to markets, talent, technology and emerging growth opportunities.

With EWIP and developments such as EBP 7, EcoWorld Malaysia is positioning itself at the intersection of these trends. Moreover, as MVV 2.0 gathers momentum, EBP 7 offers businesses an opportunity not only to secure industrial space but also to become part of a corridor that is shaping the next chapter of Malaysia's industrial growth.



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Bridging the halal gap: More Malaysian SMEs need to be on board

BY CHIN WAI LUN
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Malaysia's halal industry has come a long way since it primarily encompassed food and beverage products. Today, the sector includes pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, healthcare, logistics and a growing range of services, which contributed an estimated RM161 billion to the national economy in 2025.

Halal exports reached a record RM68.5 billion last year — a 10.9% increase from 2024 — underscoring Malaysia's position as one of the world's leading halal economies. These accounted for 4.3% of the country's total exports for 2025.

However, behind the encouraging headline number lies a persistent challenge — the participation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). While SMEs form the backbone of Malaysia's economy, accounting for the vast majority of businesses in the country, their representation in the halal-certified ecosystem remains disproportionately small.

According to Halal Development Corp Bhd (HDC) interim CEO Hanisofian Alias, Malaysia is estimated to have between 200,000 and 300,000 SMEs operating in food-related sectors alone. However, only about 11,000 halal certificates have been issued nationwide. This means fewer than 10% of potentially eligible SMEs have embraced halal certification, despite the country's aspiration to strengthen its position as a global halal hub.

HDC is a federal government agency mandated as the custodian of Malaysia's halal economy.

"Many SMEs still do not see the immediate value of halal certification. If they are serving only a small domestic market, they feel they can continue operating without it. They see certification as additional work and cost," says Hanisofian.

This perception among small businesses is understandable, he notes, as daily operational concerns often take precedence over long-term strategic planning. However, industry players argue that halal certification should not be viewed merely as a religious requirement but as a business enabler capable of opening doors to larger markets, stronger brand credibility and export opportunities.

Beyond the logo

For consumers, the halal logo may appear as a simple mark on a product's packaging. But for businesses, obtaining the certification involves a comprehensive assessment of sourcing, manufacturing practices, documentation, hygiene standards and operational processes.

SHAHRIILL BASRI/THE EDGE



The halal certification fee itself is actually very low. For micro enterprises, it can be as little as a few hundred ringgit. The real cost usually comes from upgrading premises, improving facilities and ensuring compliance."

— Hanisofian, HDC

According to Kamal Mansor, general manager of cooking oil producer 3Bumi Oleo Sdn Bhd, the journey towards certification began long before the company assumed its current identity.

The business traces its roots to a family-owned enterprise that was established in 2008. It focused on the production of cooking oil, with subsidised packets of cooking oil among its products.

In 2020, amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the company underwent a major transformation when Melewar Industrial Group Bhd (KL:MELEWAR) acquired a majority stake and restructured operations under the 3Bumi Oleo banner. According to Kamal, 3Bumi Oleo remains classified as an SME as its annual revenue is below RM15 million.

Halal certification had been a necessity even before the acquisition because it was a prerequisite for participating in the government's subsidised cooking oil programme. However, securing the certification was far from straightforward.

"It took almost a year, around eight to 10 months then. Many documents were required and there were many things we had to prepare before we could even proceed," Kamal recalls.



SMEs remain underrepresented in Malaysia's halal-certified ecosystem despite growing opportunities in domestic and international markets

The certification process extends beyond verifying ingredients. Businesses must demonstrate compliance across multiple areas, including licensing, employee health requirements, manufacturing conditions and food safety standards.

Businesses are also subject to physical inspections. Auditors assess premises, identify non-compliance issues and require corrective actions before certification can be granted.

"The first audit usually comes with recommendations. You may have to change equipment, improve your layout or replace certain materials. Then they come back to verify that everything has been rectified," he says.

For smaller businesses operating on thin margins, these upgrades can be challenging.

"Sometimes even something as simple as changing equipment can be expensive because you need food-grade materials that meet specific standards. For SMEs running on a tight budget, unexpected expenses can be significant," says Kamal.

The misconception about cost

One of the biggest barriers facing SMEs is the widespread belief that halal certification is expensive.

Hanisofian points out that the perception often stems from businesses engaging third-party consultants rather than understanding the process themselves.

"The certification fee itself is actually very low. For micro enterprises, it can be as little as a few hundred ringgit. The real cost usually comes from upgrading premises, improving facilities and ensuring compliance," he explains.

Many SMEs choose to engage consultants who promise end-to-end services, with consultancy fees sometimes reaching five figures. While this may simplify the process initially, it can also create dependence when renewals become due.



A lot of halal products in Europe come from Thailand, for instance. Malaysia already has strong halal credentials, but we need to market our products more aggressively overseas."

— Kamal, 3Bumi Oleo

Kamal encountered similar issues during his early years in business.

"There were many agents offering services, but I think entrepreneurs need to learn the process themselves. If you depend entirely on consultants, every renewal becomes another cost," he says.

Kamal suggests taking the time to understand the halal requirements first-hand. "It may seem difficult at first, but once you learn it, future applications and renewals become much easier," he notes.

PICTURES BY 3BUMI OLEO

To help SMEs overcome financial hurdles, various assistance programmes have been introduced by government agencies, commercial banks and development financial institutions. HDC has partnered with multiple stakeholders to facilitate financing, training and market access initiatives.

Nevertheless, many SMEs remain hesitant. “The issue is not a lack of support. It is readiness,” says Hanisofian.

A lot to juggle

Readiness is perhaps the most difficult obstacle to address because it goes beyond funding. Many SMEs are effectively owner-managed operations where the entrepreneur wears multiple hats, from handling procurement and production to dealing with administration, sales and customer service.

“A lot of SMEs are one-man shows. If they spend time attending training or preparing documentation, they are not doing sales or production that day,” says Hanisofian.

This constraint often leads businesses to postpone certification.

HDC has attempted to address this challenge through halal executive development schemes, coaching initiatives and training programmes. The agency works with universities and industry partners to produce graduates capable of assisting companies throughout the certification process.

However, uptake remains uneven, Hanisofian says, “We provide the checklist, explain the requirements and offer assistance. But after the first session, we often see a significant drop-off because many businesses realise they are not financially or operationally ready.”

The challenge becomes even more pronounced among micro enterprises, many of which operate from home-based premises.

Recognising this reality, Negeri Sembilan has introduced the Halal Cottage certification model specifically for small-scale operators, especially those that run home-based businesses. The initiative provides a more accessible pathway while ensuring shariah-compliant practices.

According to Hanisofian, this approach is now being studied as a potential model for broader adoption by other states.

Certification as a growth strategy

For companies that have successfully navigated the certification process, the benefits often extend well beyond compliance. At 3Bumi Oleo, halal certification has become a key business enabler. Apart from marketing its own cooking oil products, the company also manufactures halal-certified cooking oil for third-party brands under original equipment manufacturer (OEM) arrangements.

The ability to provide halal-certified OEM services creates additional revenue streams while allowing smaller brands to enter the market without investing heavily in manufacturing infrastructure.

“It builds trust with customers and makes it much easier to enter supermarkets and hypermarkets. One of the first questions retailers ask is whether you have halal certification,” says Kamal.

The certification also serves as a powerful marketing tool in international markets where consumer awareness of halal products continues to grow.

While halal demand is often associated with Muslim-majority countries, growing interest is also evident in non-Muslim markets, where halal standards are frequently viewed as indicators of quality, traceability and safety. This growing acceptance

Steps to a smoother halal certification journey

1 Understand what halal covers

Halal certification is not limited to food and beverages. It also applies to sectors such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, personal care products, ingredients, logistics and healthcare-related services.

2 Get your documentation ready

Prepare business licences, company registration documents, supplier records and other supporting paperwork before submitting an application.

3 Ensure operational compliance

Businesses must demonstrate compliance in areas such as (but not limited to):

- Product ingredients and sourcing
- Manufacturing or service delivery processes
- Hygiene and safety standards
- Employee health requirements
- Storage, logistics and traceability

4 Prepare for audits and upgrades

Auditors will inspect premises and operations to verify compliance. Businesses may need to improve facility layouts, upgrade equipment or strengthen operational controls before certification is granted.

5 Build internal halal knowledge

Rather than relying entirely on consultants, business owners should understand the certification process themselves. This can help reduce costs, simplify renewals and strengthen long-term compliance.

KEY TAKEAWAY

For many SMEs, the biggest challenge is not the certification fee itself, but ensuring their premises, processes and operations meet halal requirements.



is creating opportunities for Malaysian companies to expand their reach beyond traditional export destinations.

Looking beyond food

Although food products continue to dominate Malaysia's halal exports (53.8% of the total share in 2025), industry leaders believe the next wave of growth will come from higher-value sectors. One area showing particular promise is halal pharmaceuticals.

According to HDC, halal pharmaceutical exports have grown steadily over the past several years, rising from around RM300 million before the pandemic to more than RM1 billion in 2024. The growth reflects increasing consumer awareness of ingredient sourcing, particularly among Muslim consumers seeking assurance about substances such as gelatin and other animal-derived components commonly used in medicines and supplements.

Nutraceuticals, vitamins and generic pharmaceutical products are emerging as important export categories, with markets including Japan, the US, India and other Asean countries showing growing demand.

Meanwhile, HDC is encouraging greater focus on value-added ingredients and premium products.

Hanisofian points to opportunities in sectors such as speciality fats, cocoa derivatives, seaweed-based products and food ingredients, where innovation can generate significantly higher returns than exporting raw materials alone.

“The future is not just about producing more products. It's about producing better and higher-value products,” he says.

Building export-ready companies

A recurring concern among policymakers is that Malaysia's halal export success remains heavily concentrated among multinational corporations (MNCs).

Large corporations possess the scale, resources and market access needed to export globally, whereas many SMEs struggle to move beyond the domestic market. As a result, export figures often mask the relatively limited participation of smaller businesses in the country.

For HDC, the next phase of development involves nurturing more export-ready SMEs. This includes coaching programmes, mar-

ket access initiatives, branding support, packaging improvements and participation in trade exhibitions such as the Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS).

The agency is also collaborating with MNCs to transfer knowledge and build local capabilities. One notable example Hanisofian mentions involves Nestlé (Malaysia) Bhd (KL:NESTLE), which previously relied on imported chicken extract ingredients.

HDC helped to identify a local company with suitable manufacturing capabilities, while Nestlé provided technical guidance and support. Today, that Malaysian supplier produces the ingredients domestically and is preparing to meet export requirements.

The initiative illustrates how strategic partnerships can accelerate SME development while strengthening domestic supply chains.

Meanwhile, Hanisofian acknowledges that scaling SMEs remains a long-term undertaking. “Many SMEs reach a comfortable level and stay there. To move beyond that requires investment, innovation and the willingness to take risks,” he says.

Strengthening Malaysia's halal leadership

As global competition intensifies, Malaysia's halal ecosystem will need to adapt and evolve to keep pace.

Countries such as Thailand have become increasingly successful exporters of halal-certified products, despite not being Muslim-majority nations. Kamal believes Malaysia can learn from such examples, particularly in terms of international promotion and market penetration.

“A lot of halal products in Europe come from Thailand, for instance. Malaysia already has strong halal credentials, but we need to market our products more aggressively overseas,” he says.

Meanwhile, HDC is driving the transformation of the Halal Malaysia (HALMAS) Status Recognition Framework 2026 to reinforce HALMAS-certified Halal Parks as strategic investment platforms that attract high-value investments, strengthen ecosystem governance and support the sustainable growth of Malaysia's halal economy. The transformation is expected to enhance the competitiveness of the halal ecosystem while reinforcing Malaysia's position as a leading global halal hub.

For Hanisofian, maintaining Malaysia's leadership position will require continuous improvement. “Other countries are catching up very quickly. We need to continue building capabilities, strengthening our ecosystem and helping more SMEs participate,” he says.

Ultimately, Malaysia's halal ambitions will depend not only on MNCs and headline export figures, but also on the thousands of smaller businesses that form the foundation of the economy.

The infrastructure, support programmes and market opportunities are increasingly in place. The challenge now is to convince more SMEs that halal certification is not merely a regulatory requirement but a strategic investment in their future growth.

If more businesses can make that leap, Malaysia's next phase of halal development may be driven not by a handful of large exporters, but by a much broader base of home-grown enterprises ready to compete on the global stage. **E**



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Spanning 910 acres of prime land at the rapidly growing IDRISS in Sepang, NSIP is designed to move beyond the conventional industrial park model

Redefining the industrial baseline

Driven by the “China+1” strategy, multinational corporations are looking to diversify their manufacturing operations, turning Southeast Asia into a competitive hotspot. In this regional race, the traditional playbook of offering cheap raw industrial land is rapidly losing its shine as today’s global giants — semiconductor manufacturers, advanced logistics providers and massive data centre operators — are prioritising ecosystem readiness, stringent environmental, social and governance (ESG) compliance, as well as deep technological integration.

Strategically located in the heart of this region, Malaysia finds itself at a unique junction where the nation’s industrial market is transitioning from basic manufacturing hubs into sophisticated, high-value economic zones. The evolution is being driven by long-term government frameworks such as the New Industrial Master Plan 2030 (NIMP 2030) and National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR).

It is in this macro environment that NCT Alliance Bhd (KL:NCT) is drawing a new blueprint for the region through its flagship development, the NCT Smart Industrial Park (NSIP).

Spanning 910 acres of prime land at the rapidly growing Integrated Development Region in South Selangor (IDRISS) in Sepang, Selangor, NSIP is designed to move beyond the conventional industrial park model.

Boasting a gross development value of RM10.2 billion, the project represents a paradigm shift as Malaysia’s largest GreenRE-certified Managed Industrial Park. It recently earned the highest 5 Diamond achievement in the Low Carbon Cities 2030 Challenge, making it the first facility of its kind in the nation to secure the honour.

“The industrial market in Malaysia is on a steady upward trajectory, and what is most interesting right now is the shift in demand. Industrial remains the strongest performing segment in the property space, supported by ongoing manufacturing activity, logistics expansion and Malaysia’s role in regional supply chain realignment,” says NCT Alliance executive director Yap Chun Theng.

“As ESG considerations have become part of the baseline discussion, most global players now come with non-negotiable sustainability requirements,” he adds.

It is this commitment to forward-looking infrastructure that is woven directly into the NSIP master plan. The park features a 100-year flood mitigation plan designed to handle severe climate events, extensive green layouts and integrated rainwater harvesting systems to conserve vital water resources.

NSIP’s technical framework has caught the attention of major global players. In May, NCT Alliance signed a term sheet for

PICTURES BY NCT ALLIANCE



“For NSIP, success goes far beyond occupancy rates or financial returns. If future industrial developments across the region adopt smarter, greener and more integrated approaches because of what was pioneered here, that would be one of our most meaningful achievements.” — Yap

the proposed sale of a 100-acre tract to a global data centre operator. This milestone underscores the park’s ability to satisfy the massive power, cooling and structural requirements native to data infrastructure.

Crucial to this operational efficiency is a deep-running digital backbone built in tandem with Telekom Malaysia Bhd (KL:TM). Evolving past basic connectivity, the partnership integrates advanced digital solutions such as Vision AI, an intelligent operations centre and intelligent building management systems. Tied together by the proprietary NCT G Super App, the ecosystem streamlines security, tenant convenience and overall facility operations.

Phases of scalable growth

To be developed over six phases, NSIP’s master plan is carefully curated to ensure a highly scalable development pipeline that responds directly to market absorption rates.

Phase 1 sets the initial core infrastructure, comprising 280 units of detached, semi-detached, cluster and terraced industrial property, alongside parcels of raw land. Following the strong market reception, NCT Alliance broke ground on Phase 2 in November last year.



“Phase 2 builds on the foundation established in Phase 1, and has been further refined based on early market response and evolving requirements. While Phase 1 focused on establishing the core industrial base and putting the essential infrastructure in place, Phase 2 emphasises efficient site planning and more flexible development configurations to better support varied operational needs,” Yap explains.

The remaining phases are advancing steadily through the regulatory pipeline, with Phase 3 on track to receive its planning permission approval from the local authorities by the end of 2026.

Phases 4 and 5 are designated for a petrol station and commercial shoplots to service the park’s incoming workforce, while the newly integrated Phase 6 will expand the overall land bank to its current 910 acres.

A core component of this master planning is the inclusion of an AI-managed centralised labour quarters. By digitising workforce housing management, NSIP addresses a critical pain point for multinational corporations — ensuring high-standard, compliant and secure living conditions for the workforce, which directly affects a tenant’s social governance metrics.

“NSIP’s target industries are mainly advanced manufacturing, logistics, data centre and technology-driven operations, and these sectors require world-class standards. In line with this, we continue to elevate the park’s capabilities to meet sophisticated requirements,” says Yap.

Navigating headwinds and capital volatility

The execution of a multibillion-ringgit, multiphase mega project requires extreme financial and operational discipline, particularly against the current global backdrop of geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions and fluctuating commodity prices. NCT Alliance acknowledges these realities and has in place proactive mitigation strategies.

“Like all developers, we are not completely insulated from global developments. Geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions and fluctuations in fuel and commodity prices inevitably influence our construction costs and timelines. However, these challenges are not new to the industry and we continue to adopt a disciplined approach,” says Yap.

To protect construction schedules and budgets from sudden spikes in inflation, the company relies on early procurement planning. By working closely with contractors and suppliers to lock in critical raw materials well in advance, the company minimises exposure to market volatility

while protecting the structural build quality.

On the capital front, the developer has deployed a sophisticated financing mechanism to shield its long-term development expenditure. At end-2025, the company announced the launch of a RM1 billion sukuk wakalah programme, with Malayan Banking Bhd (KL:MAYBANK) backing the inaugural tranche.

“The sukuk wakalah programme is an important component of our capital management strategy while providing the flexibility to pursue new opportunities. In a higher interest-rate environment, this structure provides funding certainty as it reduces reliance on short-term financing and gives us more stability in planning capital expenditure across future phases without being too exposed to market fluctuations,” Yap explains, adding that in an era of elevated global interest rates, this Islamic financing structure acts as a critical buffer.

He also highlights that this capital allows NSIP to maintain its long-term vision without succumbing to short-term cost-cutting measures that could dilute its sustainability standards. Furthermore, it strengthens the developer’s position in the face of aggressive regional competition.

“The conversation today is moving beyond land cost. Multinational corporations are evaluating locations based on infrastructure quality, sustainability credentials, operational efficiency and ecosystem support,” says Yap. “Even if regional competition intensifies through land subsidies or pricing pressure, we are optimistic that investors will continue to prioritise locations and models that deliver long-term operational value.”

Ultimately, he views NSIP as an exportable standard for industrialisation in developing markets. The long-term goal is to utilise the data and management frameworks captured by the NCT G Super App to create a replicable model for smart and green industrial parks worldwide.

“For NSIP, success goes far beyond occupancy rates or financial returns. If future industrial developments across the region adopt smarter, greener and more integrated approaches because of what was pioneered here, that would be one of our most meaningful achievements,” says Yap. **E**



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The growing business case for green industrial parks

BY **CHELSEA J LIM**
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“Location, location, location” has long been the defining mantra of the property development industry, whether in the residential, commercial or industrial sector.

Today, however, strategic location alone is no longer enough for industrial developments. As manufacturers pursue greater logistical and operational efficiency, factors such as renewable energy (RE) adoption, energy-efficient building design and resource optimisation are playing an increasingly important role in site selection. These features help reduce operating costs, enhance competitiveness and support decarbonisation goals.

Their importance is set to grow further as Malaysia advances its decarbonisation agenda through initiatives such as the New Industrial Master Plan (NIMP) 2030. The impending implementation of carbon tax further reinforces the green agenda.

NIMP 2030 marks a shift from previous industrial master plans through its mission-based approach, which embeds sustainability across industries rather than treating it as a standalone objective. One of its four core missions is to advance net-zero emissions by promoting cleaner industrial practices, reducing carbon intensity and building a resilient low-carbon economy. Complementing this effort, the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR) targets 70% RE capacity by 2050.

As these initiatives accelerate Malaysia's transition to a low-carbon economy, their impact is being felt across sectors, including property development, prompting businesses to rethink how they operate, invest and grow.

Industrial park developers are responding by placing greater emphasis on integrating green features and renewable energy readiness into their developments.

The shift is driven by growing demand from multinational corporations (MNCs) and export-oriented manufacturers, which face increasing pressure to align their operations and supply chains with environmental, social and governance (ESG) commitments.

As sustainability becomes a strategic business imperative, green-ready industrial parks are emerging as a key differentiator, helping attract investment while strengthening long-term industrial competitiveness.

Green industrial parks gain ground

These combined pressures are reshaping how companies choose manufacturing locations, and prompting developers to rethink their industrial park offerings.

For example, Mah Sing Group Bhd (KL:MAHSING) is incorporating sustainability features into its industrial developments as manufacturers increasingly seek greener, future-ready facilities.

Group CEO and executive director Datuk Voon Tin Yow says interest in sustainable industrial developments has grown significantly in recent years, particularly in Johor, which continues to attract investments in manufacturing, logistics and technology.

“Many companies are becoming more conscious of their carbon footprint and assessing how future regulations may impact their operating costs and competitiveness,” Voon says.

“Businesses are increasingly exploring opportunities to reduce energy consumption, increase renewable energy adoption and strengthen their sustainability reporting capabilities. Customer requirements, investor expectations and supply chain commitments are also encouraging companies to adopt more sustainable operating practices.”

He adds that demand is particularly strong among export-oriented manu-

facturers and companies integrated into global supply chains, which are increasingly evaluating the availability of green features when selecting industrial parks.

At its Mah Sing Industrial Park (MSIP) in Shah Alam, Selangor, the developer has incorporated sustainability considerations at the master-planning stage, including solar-ready industrial buildings, energy-efficient design features, electric vehicle (EV) charging readiness and efficient utility infrastructure.

Voon says this approach is intended to lower the barrier of entry for occupiers that may face capital constraints in independently adopting sustainability solutions.

The shift at developer level reflects broader regulatory and market forces that are reshaping industrial parks across Malaysia.

Ernst & Young Tax Consultants Sdn Bhd (EY) partner and sustainability tax leader for Malaysia Sharon Yong says the impending carbon tax will be a key factor influencing industrial site selection among manufacturers.

“Carbon pricing will increase operating costs for manufacturing tenants in Malaysia, making carbon-related measures a key factor in site selection. Tenants are likely to favour industrial parks that help minimise carbon exposure through access to renewable energy, energy-efficient infrastructure and emissions monitoring.”

She adds that parks reliant on carbon-intensive energy sources risk losing competitiveness, while lower-carbon developments are better positioned to support compliance and decarbonisation goals.

From a developer's perspective, access to renewable energy is becoming a key value proposition.

“Developers will need to work closely with manufacturers to provide access to



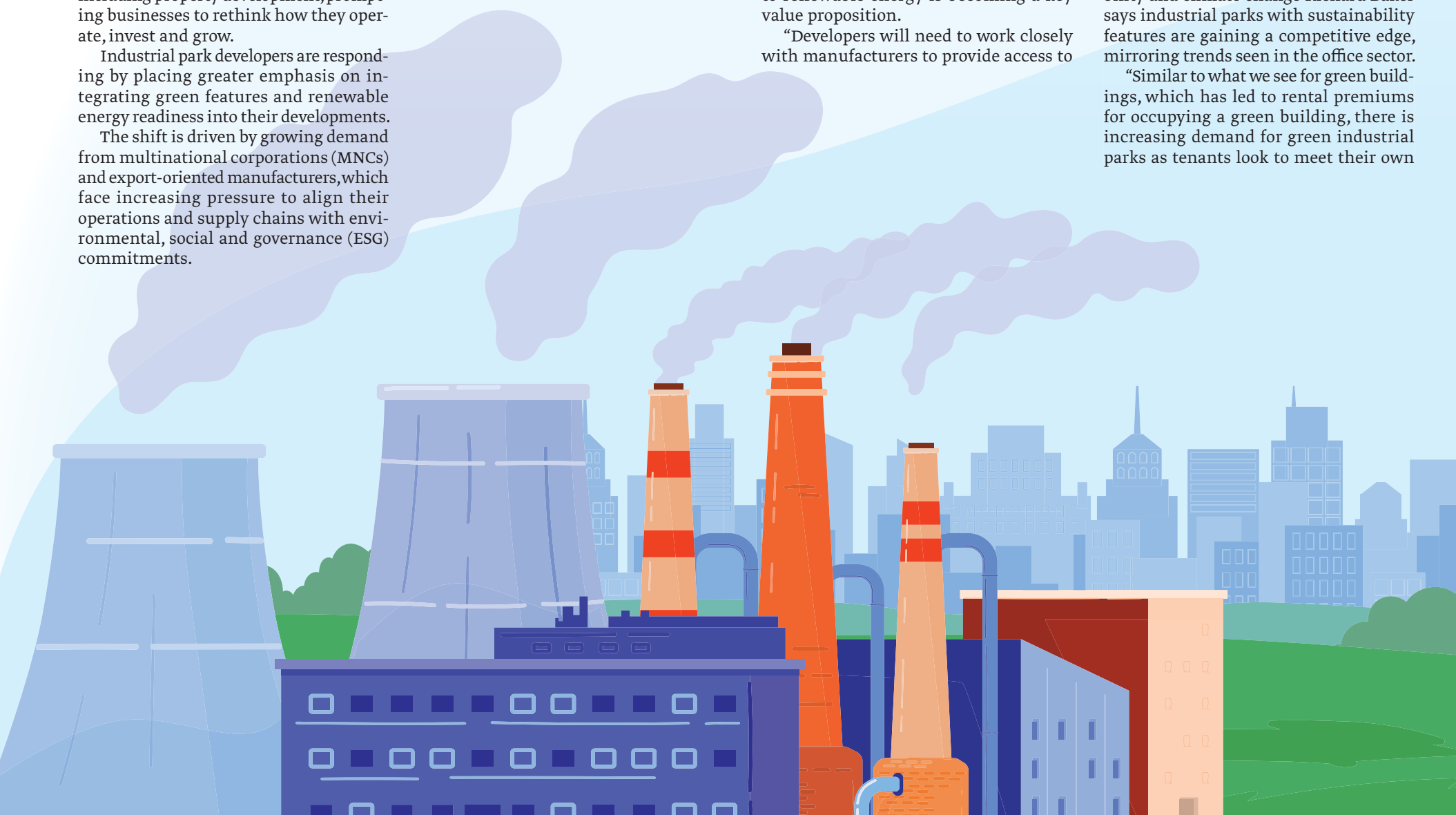
MAH SING GROUP

“Many companies are becoming more conscious of their carbon footprint and assessing how future regulations may impact their operating costs and competitiveness.”
— Voon, Mah Sing

renewable energy solutions, positioning this as part of an integrated value proposition,” Yong says.

PwC Malaysia director for sustainability and climate change Richard Baker says industrial parks with sustainability features are gaining a competitive edge, mirroring trends seen in the office sector.

“Similar to what we see for green buildings, which has led to rental premiums for occupying a green building, there is increasing demand for green industrial parks as tenants look to meet their own



PWC



“Foreign investors will be looking at the ability to access green power and availability of power purchase agreements and green tariffs as part of their screening of viable investment locations.”

— Baker, PwC

The carbon tax factor

Beyond investor preferences and sustainability commitments, regulatory measures are set to further accelerate the transition towards greener industrial developments.

As mentioned, a key driver accelerating the green transition is the proposed carbon tax. First announced in Budget 2025, the tax is expected to be implemented this year and its implementation targets the energy, iron and steel sectors — all of which are carbon-intensive sectors.

As the implementation looms, Yong says businesses are already preparing for implementation through early engagement on measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) frameworks. The framework is used to track and verify greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

“Over the past year, there have also been industry engagement sessions and focus groups with relevant stakeholders on carbon pricing implementation, including MRV framework. This has allowed for some level of capacity building, particularly among high emitters, as well as the submission of industry feedback to the government,” she says.

Although the tax has yet to be implemented, its impending introduction is already driving behavioural change among companies — particularly high-emitting businesses — shifting sustainability efforts from voluntary ESG initiatives to mandatory compliance with direct financial implications, as behavioural changes have been observed in countries that have implemented carbon pricing, Baker notes.

“Historically, countries adopt a lower starting point for a carbon tax at the initial stage to allow time to improve data readiness, invest in internal capability building and early abatement, but there is generally a pathway and signal that [the carbon] price will rise to align with efforts to encourage emission reductions at an increased rate,” he says.

“The ability to assess their carbon tax impact will help businesses explore ways to reduce their exposure through investments in renewable energy and other decarbonisation measures.”

Yong adds that the implementation is expected to have a relatively modest introductory carbon tax rate to facilitate smooth implementation.

“It should also be recognised that transitioning to renewable energy and low-car-

ERNST & YOUNG



“Carbon pricing will increase operating costs for manufacturing tenants in Malaysia, making carbon-related measures a key factor in site selection.”

— Yong, EY

bon operations often requires time and substantial capital investment. Many businesses have existing assets with long useful lives, and immediate replacement may not be economically feasible,” she says.

“As such, carbon pricing policies may need to be introduced or calibrated alongside complementary measures — such as thresholds, transitional reliefs or incentives — to help alleviate the cost burden and support a more gradual transition.”

Global pressures reshape supply chains

Carbon pricing pressures are not limited to domestic policy. Globally, manufacturers exporting to the European Union are also subject to the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), a climate change policy tool that imposes a levy on carbon emissions embedded in imported goods.

Compliance with CBAM requires companies to measure and report product-level emissions data, making emissions reporting readiness increasingly important. The

readiness in emissions reporting, Yong says, remains a challenge especially for SMEs that are integrated in the global value chains.

“Where verified data is not available, default emissions values will apply, which are often more conservative and may result in higher effective carbon costs,” she says.

PwC Malaysia’s Baker adds that procurement practices are already shifting, with customers requiring suppliers to disclose emissions data as part of contract conditions.

This is placing additional pressure on SMEs, even when they are not directly regulated, as access to markets and financing becomes increasingly linked to ESG performance.

These evolving supply-chain requirements further strengthen the case for industrial parks that can provide access to renewable energy and sustainability-enabling infrastructure.

Responding to this challenge, Mah Sing’s Voon says the developer’s approach to ease the transition of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) into the low-carbon economy is by integrating sustainability-enabling infrastructure at the master planning itself.

“This allows SMEs to access greener solutions without having to undertake significant upfront investments independently. This includes features such as solar-ready industrial buildings, energy-efficient design considerations, EV-charging readiness and efficient utility infrastructure.

“By embedding these capabilities within the industrial park ecosystem, SMEs can progressively adopt greener practices according to their operational requirements and growth plans,” he says.

Firms with strong sustainability credentials, however, may gain a competitive advantage by positioning their low-carbon operations as a differentiator.

As Malaysia advances its decarbonisation agenda, industrial parks are evolving beyond traditional manufacturing hubs. With carbon pricing, renewable energy adoption and ESG requirements increasingly embedded in investment and operating decisions, green industrial parks are becoming a critical component of the country’s low-carbon industrial strategy.

“Ultimately, carbon pricing will shift green industrial parks from a ‘nice-to-have’ sustainability feature to a necessity, opening new revenue opportunities and strengthening alignment with investor expectations and national policy direction,” says EY’s Yong.



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Anchoring cross-border trade at the Zero Mile Zone

With global supply chains shaking up how and where products are made, companies are aggressively seeking out future-proof industrial hubs that promise environmental sustainability with seamless cross-border connectivity to ensure their long-term competitive edge.

It is this evolving corporate mandate that is driving interest in Malaysia's northern corridor, where industrial property is shifting from traditional brick-and-mortar factories to highly integrated economic ecosystems that are designed to anchor regional trade networks.

Stepping squarely into this high-growth trajectory is NCT Alliance Bhd (KL:NCT) with its latest industrial development in northern Malaysia called NCT InnoSphere (NIS).

Strategically situated at the "Zero Mile Zone", which borders Thailand at Bukit Kayu Hitam in Kedah, this ambitious project has a gross development value of RM981 million and spans about 137 acres of free zone land in the federal government's Delapan Special Border Economic Zone (SBEZ).

Planned with an initial scope encompassing eight distinct development phases, NIS will feature a comprehensive mix of 230 industrial units across a range of typologies, including terraced, cluster, semi-detached, detached and customised build-to-suit options. These are designed to accommodate a diverse mix of tenants, including electrical and electronics (E&E) firms, advanced manufacturers and high-value logistics providers.

"NIS represents our first step into Malaysia's northern industrial corridor and a move to extend our footprint beyond the central region into a cross-border growth zone," says NCT Alliance executive director Yap Chun Theng.

It is noteworthy that NIS is the first Managed Industrial Park in northern Malaysia to secure a Silver Provisional GreenRE Certification, setting a new sustainable benchmark for the region.

"The certification serves as a practical

reference point throughout development," Yap explains. "It helps translate sustainability principles into tangible design and infrastructure decisions at NIS, ensuring environmental performance is systematically considered from the early stages of implementation."

Mirroring the blueprint of its sister project, the NCT Smart Industrial Park (NSIP) in Selangor, NIS is distinguished by NCT Alliance's enhanced dual focus on sustainability and digital infrastructure. This foundation ensures the park not only meets current demands but can also adapt seamlessly to future technological and environmental shifts.

Ultimately, NIS strives to create an integrated hub that connects directly into overland bilateral trade flows, while leveraging direct access to regional maritime channels through Penang Port.

With the sustainable target in mind, NIS boasts solar-ready building designs, energy-efficient specifications, and widespread electric vehicle (EV) charging readiness. Operationally, the park will integrate intelligent management platforms to run real-time, data-driven diagnostics on energy, utilities and waste. All of this will be backed by a 5G-enabled digital backbone developed in partnership with Telekom Malaysia Bhd (KL:TM).

While the immediate focus is on core



"We hope to see Bukit Kayu Hitam evolve beyond a border crossing point into a vibrant economic gateway that connects businesses, markets and opportunities across Asean." – Yap

capabilities such as smart security, asset tracking and basic traffic coordination to ease border freight movement, the park's underlying Internet of Things (IoT) framework is designed to scale progressively into more complex automated grid management as occupancy and tenant requirements mature.

"We are continually exploring ways to further strengthen the ESG pillars within the park. As the development progresses, we will also engage industry experts to introduce additional ESG features that are relevant and practical for our tenants' evolving needs," Yap says. "Through these [design and planning] approaches, NIS is set to set a new benchmark for sustainable industrial development in northern Malaysia and to contribute to Malaysia's long-term aspiration for a net zero future."

Navigating global volatility via phased execution

While the deployment of a major industrial asset such as NIS comes at a challenging

juncture for the broader property sector — with escalating geopolitical tensions, volatile fuel prices and fluctuating commodity costs creating thin margins and unpredictable procurement cycles for developers globally — NCT Alliance is using its phased rollout to avoid short-term pricing pressures and insulate the development from macroeconomic headwinds.

"Global events have created a more complex operating environment," Yap says. "It is crucial to note, however, that industrial projects of this scale are built with a long-term horizon in mind."

By structuring the master plan across eight phases, he explains, management retains the agility to pace capital expenditure in line with real-time market demand. Procurement strategies can be adjusted dynamically in response to cyclical supply chains, allowing the group to balance affordability for incoming investors with its own development margins.

This defensive positioning has helped preserve strong commercial momentum, with Phase 1 attracting healthy preliminary interest from regional logistics distributors and specialised manufacturers seeking greater supply chain visibility and protection against external shocks.

With construction of Phase 1 underway, NIS is seeing encouraging response from domestic and international investors, particularly in logistics, advanced manufacturing, and the E&E sectors, says Yap.

He attributes this momentum partly to the location's prospects, supported by the federal government's RM2.7 billion allocation to catalyse economic activity along the northern border, with a focus on the Delapan SBEZ.

Yap says the investment will strengthen the wider ecosystem through improvements in border infrastructure, logistics networks and trade facilitation, enhancing the region's competitiveness as an industrial and logistics hub. He adds that these upgrades support more efficient cross-border movement and greater supply chain reliability.

Furthermore, the allocation signals strong long-term government commitment to developing Bukit Kayu Hitam as a strategic economic gateway.

"The allocation is a catalytic move for the broader northern corridor," Yap says. "For NIS, the value lies in the momentum it creates across the surrounding ecosystem. We hope to see Bukit Kayu Hitam evolve beyond a border crossing point into a vibrant economic gateway that connects businesses, markets and opportunities across Asean."

Yap says the long-term outlook for industrial real estate in the northern region remains structurally robust, supported by national frameworks such as the New Industrial Master Plan 2030 (NIMP 2030) and the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR).

He believes that as corporations prioritise nearshoring and decentralised logistics to mitigate global disruptions, sophisticated managed ecosystems are increasingly outperforming basic industrial plots.

"The future will be in favour of developers that can combine infrastructure, technology, sustainability and services to support business growth," Yap says. "We believe that is exactly where the market is heading, and it is a direction that our industrial parks have been preparing for from the very beginning."



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POWERING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

BY **RACHEAL LEE**
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Around the world, eco-industrial parks are redefining industrial developments by integrating principles of the circular economy, sustainability and innovation. Moving beyond the traditional take-make-dispose model, these parks enable businesses to share resources, repurpose waste materials and create closed-loop systems that reduce environmental impact. The following examples showcase how collaboration, resource efficiency and circular practices can drive economic growth while advancing a more sustainable future.



1



2



3



4

1 Environment Park, Italy

Environment Park in Torino, Italy, is a technology park that was established in the late 1990s to advance environmental sustainability as a driver of competitiveness. Its mission is to serve as a hub for public and private stakeholders working towards sustainable innovation.

With more than two decades' experience in environmental innovation and spanning 30,000 sq m, the park is home to about 70 companies and a range of research laboratories focused on green technologies and sustainable development. It also features a convention centre, community services and green public spaces.

Sustainability is embedded throughout the park's infrastructure, with features including green roofs and walls, rainwater recovery, radiant ceiling and floor systems, solar photovoltaic panels, electric vehicle charging stations, rooftop beehives and a mini-hydroelectric power station.

2 Ecoparc Industrial Park, Morocco

A partnership between the French Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services of Morocco and the Moroccan government, Ecoparc Industrial Park in Berrechid is the first eco-industrial park in the country. Planned on a total area of 61ha, it has the capacity to accommodate 192 businesses. It is the first on the continent to be an HEQ-certified (High Environmental Quality) project at the national level.

Operational since 2015, it is designed and developed to offer clean industries a new working environment conducive to business growth and employee well-being. It offers both land plots for buildings and ready-to-use buildings with high-

quality infrastructure at a competitive cost.

It currently hosts companies from various sectors, including automotive, food processing, chemical, electronics, renewable energy and textiles.

3 Progetto Manifattura, Italy

This technological park in Trentino Sviluppo, Rovereto, is dedicated to green innovation. It hosts companies, start-ups and research entities operating and interacting in the fields of circular economy, smart buildings, sustainable mobility, clean energy, sports industry and quality of life.

It is located within a former tobacco factory established in 1854, once one of the most important tobacco manufacturing centres in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The site has since been redeveloped and optimised to provide companies with modern spaces, resources and opportunities for collaboration.

4 AMATA City Bien Hoa, Vietnam

One of the earliest and most successful industrial estate projects in Vietnam, AMATA City Bien Hoa covers 513ha in Dong Nai Province. Established in 1994 as a joint venture between the Long Binh Industrial Park Development (Sonadezi) and Thailand-based Amata Corp, it is home to more than 170 companies.

AMATA City Bien Hoa is among more than 300 industrial parks in Vietnam selected by the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization to pilot the Eco-Industrial Park (EIP) model. The initiative applies circular economy principles and supports the development of a standard framework for Vietnam's industrial parks.



ENVIRONMENT PARK



6

ULSAN MIPO NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX



7

SUZHOU INDUSTRIAL PARK

5 Kalundborg Eco-industrial Park, Denmark

Kalundborg Eco-Industrial Park is an industrial symbiosis network where companies collaborate to use each other's by-products and share resources. It is widely regarded as the first full realisation of industrial symbiosis.

At its centre is the Asnæs Power Station, a 1,500MW coal-fired plant with material and energy links to surrounding companies and the local community. Its surplus heat supplies district heating for 3,500 homes and a nearby fish farm, whose sludge is sold as fertiliser. Steam from the plant is supplied to pharmaceutical and enzyme

manufacturer Novo Nordisk and a nearby oil refinery operated by Equinor, formerly Statoil. This reuse of heat reduces thermal pollution discharged into a nearby fjord. Gypsum recovered from the plant's sulphur dioxide scrubber is sold to a wallboard manufacturer.

6 Ulsan Mipo National Industrial Complex, South Korea

Built in 1962 under the government's drive to industrialise the nation in line with the first Economic Development Plan, the Ulsan Mipo National Industrial Complex spans 45.6 million sq ft in Ulsan and is South Korea's first and largest coastal national industrial complex. It is divided into six districts — the Ulsan

Petrochemical Industrial Complex, Yecheon District, Maeam District, Yongyeon District, Hyomun District and Mipo District — and is home to around 780 companies across the automotive, shipbuilding and petrochemical sectors, including SK Energy, Hyundai Motor Co, HD Hyundai Heavy Industries Co Ltd, Lotte Chemical Corp and Hanwha Solutions Corp.

At end-2022, the complex had generated KRW147.3 trillion in output and US\$59.3 billion in exports, ranking first among industrial complexes nationwide.

7 Suzhou Industrial Park, China

Established in February 1994 under China's reform and opening-up policy through a bilateral agreement between the Chinese and Singaporean governments, the Suzhou Industrial Park in Jiangsu province was conceived as a showcase for modern international standards in urban planning, economic development and public administration, drawing on Singapore's experience in integrated development and governance.

Despite an initial slow start, it has grown into one of China's most prominent industrial zones, covering 278 sq km and supporting 807,800 permanent residents since 2019. It now hosts a wide range of multinational corporations and high-tech firms, alongside the integrated residential and commercial infrastructure envisioned in its original master plan.



5

KALUNDBORG ECO-INDUSTRIAL PARK

Catering to SMEs and supporting industries



An artist's impression of the 3-storey semi-detached factories

Adenland Group of Companies provided much-needed support to the growing industrial sector with the introduction of its Kundang Latar Industrial Park (KLIP) Plus development on Feb 7, 2026.

Spanning 69 acres, the leasehold park is strategically located next to the Kundang exit of the Kuala Lumpur-Kuala Selangor Expressway (Latar), which allows investors to transport goods to and from key locations around the Klang Valley and beyond.

According to CEO Nicholas Chang and chief operating officer Clarissa Wong, the group acquired the land in 2012. Initially part of a larger tract measuring 150 acres that was divided by Jalan Kampong Baru Sri Kundang, the land was earmarked for residential development.

However, the group noticed that one section of the land was flanked by existing industrial development and realised that it might not be suitable for a residential development. This resulted in a change of plans and the creation of KLIP Plus.

Furthermore, the land was already ideal for industrial development as it had a setback of about 200ft from Jalan Kampong Baru Sri Kundang. That allowed the project to meet the environmental impact assessment (EIA) requirement that calls for adequate separation between industrial and residential developments.

KLIP Plus — “Plus”, according to Wong, refers to “giving extra value in our products” — has a gross development value of RM600 million. It is designed to cater for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), light industrial operators, logistics and warehousing businesses, as well as investors seeking flexible industrial development options.

Chang explains that from the beginning, the development was not intended for large industrial companies. “It was not our intention to build for very big manufacturing companies,” he says, adding that while the park is gated and guarded, it is not a stratified development.

The industrial park will feature 190 factories and 13 plots of land for bungalow factories. The factories comprise 72 three-storey semi-detached factories, 24 three-storey cluster factories, 33 two-storey link factories and 61 low-cost link factories.



A cross section of a 3-storey semi-detached factory, where a lift can be installed, if required

The 13 plots of land, which have widths of 90ft to 253ft and lengths of 301ft, have selling prices of RM5.3 million to RM8.59 million (RM118 to RM130 psf). The developer will help build the factories according to customers’ specifications.

The semidee factories have land areas of 75ft to 85ft by 145ft to 200ft, with built-ups from 7,453 to 10,792 sq ft and selling prices of RM3.7 million to RM6.46 million (RM482 to RM599 psf).

The cluster factories share two sides

with other factories and have measurements of 65ft by 120ft and built-ups of 5,868 sq ft. They are selling from RM3.2 million to RM3.4 million (RM547 to RM580 psf). The link factories measure 30ft to 59ft by 85ft to 90ft with built-ups from 3,458 to 6,414 sq ft. They are selling from RM1.73 million to RM3.2 million (RM497 to RM551 psf).

The low-cost link factories will measure 20ft by 60ft, with built-ups ranging from 1,200 sq ft to 1,475 sq ft. The selling price is being finalised.

MOHD SHAHRIN YAHYA/THE EDGE



“It was not our intention to build for very big manufacturing companies.” — Chang

“We look at the design of the unit to help the owner save on energy use.” — Wong

Designing what the market needs

The factory designs were determined after Adenland commissioned a feasibility study from a valuer and consulted agents, end-users, business partners and industry contacts. The decision to offer cluster factories was aimed at reducing costs for buyers, who no longer need to manage a back lane, Chang says.

Some key features of the factories include heavy-duty flooring to accommodate heavy loads, provision for optional service lift installation, full-height glazed windows for ample natural lighting and front-loading motorised roller shutters.

Chang and Wong explain that the link factories have a terraced house-like design that features a gate and a “car porch” that allows container trucks to back in safely while allowing the owners to lock the gate.

Across the industrial park, there will be high-speed internet, advanced security systems and an efficient waste management system. There will also be on-site management services and maintenance support for companies.

Wong adds that Adenland also ensures that the factories align with environmental, social and governance (ESG) initiatives, considering how more and more companies are making sure that their supply chains are ESG-compliant.

First, the developer is pursuing GreenRE certification for the factories to improve energy efficiency. Features include coloured glazed windows that minimise heat transfer while letting in plenty of natural sunlight and reduce energy use with lower air-conditioning consumption. “We look at the design of the unit to help the owner save on energy use,” says Wong.

Second, social responsibility is encouraged, with the developer engaging with contractors to adopt eco-friendly practices, properly dispose of waste and ensure workers’ safety.

Third, governance is ensured with strict compliance with rules, such as a fair tender process and a securely locked tender box.

Both Chang and Wong believe strongly in their social responsibility to support the local SME community. They fulfil this by ensuring that Adenland designs modern, cost-effective factories that are affordable for smaller businesses, without compromising on quality, functionality and sustainability. **E**



An aerial view of Kundang Latar Industrial Park Plus, which spans 69 acres and has a gross development value of RM600 million



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