

Nilai gearing up to be educational hub

BY S.C.CHEAH IN
BANDAR BARU NILAI

BANDAR Baru Nilai is all set to be the educational hub for Malaysia and the region, said PK Resources Bhd executive chairman Tan Sri Dr Gan Kong Seng.

The shift in emphasis from a commercial to an educational hub over the past few years reflected the group's resolve to ride out the current soft property market.

Gan said there would be aggressive promotions to woo more foreign students as well as institutions of higher learning and research centres to establish their bases in the township.

"We are talking to certain parties to set up their institutions here," he said, adding that small and medium-scale training and vocational centres would also be encouraged to relocate here.

There are also plans to relocate Chinese primary and secondary schools to the township.

One area that the group is seriously looking into is biotechnology, involving the setting up of high-tech plants to manufacture drugs and offering laboratory services.

The township, which is 11km from the KL International Airport, so far has attracted four to five colleges and research institutions, namely Inti College, the group's Nilai

College, Nilai Cancer Institute, Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia and the Global Institute of Studies.

This is no mean feat as other developments that claim to be an educational hub have only a college or two.

Gan is proud of the fact that the Nilai Cancer Institute is the only cancer hospital in the country carrying out research on the disease.

He said the Metropolitan College also had bought a piece of land for its campus.

Gan is happy that the student population is increasing. There are about 8,000 students at the Inti College and 2,000 at PK Resources' Nilai College.

He said Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia had about 30% to 40% foreign students.

"We have achieved a lot over the past 10 years. We're still trying very hard to make this township mature. As a township developer, I have to look at the needs of the population.

"We have donated a 20- to 30-acre piece of land to the Negri Sembilan government to build an indoor stadium. It is under construction and will be the venue for the 2004 Sukma Games. There will also be a large, recreational park," he said.

The past few years had been a trying time for Nilai that started in the early 1990s by the state government

to be a unique, distinct and well-planned integrated township with modern infrastructure amenities.

The state government through its investment arm Menteri Besar Inc, Negri Sembilan, has a substantial effective equity participation in BBN Development Sdn Bhd, the developer of Bandar Baru Nilai.

The federal government, through Negri Sembilan State Development Corporation (PKNNS) and the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda), also has a substantial stake in PK Resources, the ultimate holding company of BBN Development.

In the early 1980s, PK Resources and PKNNS jointly developed the 600-acre Nilai Industrial Park, adjacent to Bandar Baru Nilai.

The SKF group, the world's largest ball-bearing company, Hualon and TDK were among the first to set up their facilities there.

The success of this industrial park resulted in the need for residential units and amenities to cater to factory workers.

The 300-acre Taman Semarak was then developed to meet this need but it was still insufficient.

As Gan recalled, "Based on the number of factories then, it was supposed to have 40,000 workers or an industrial population of about 100,000."

He said there was also a need to



Tan Sri Dr Gan Kong Seng is determined to turn Bandar Baru Nilai into a regional educational hub

cater to people moving south of the Klang Valley.

Bandar Baru Nilai and Salak Tinggi had been designated as airport cities and the Nilai township was to be a commercial hub, he added.

"By the time the KL International Airport was completed, the recession set in. During the earlier days there were 35,000 to 40,000 residential units planned for the township.

"We now use some of the land for residential units to build educational and research institutions. This does not mean that the number of residential units has fallen drastically, as the institutions have built their own hostels," he said.

Gan said the emphasis now was on

landed property. "We do not want to go into office and apartment developments too early. There are sufficient residential units."

A few apartment blocks have been built, including one occupied by MAS workers.

Meanwhile, PK Resources' property development business netted a turnover of RM63.9mil during the financial year ended Dec 31, 2002. It remains focused on affordable properties in Bandar Baru Nilai valued at below RM150,000.

Gan also noted that the labour shortage in the middle of last year arose from the repatriation of foreign construction workers, resulting in the delay in completing some housing projects.