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DANGA HEIGHTS, JOHOR

PLATINUM PARK, KL

MASTERPLANNING

SOMA MASTERPLAN, INDIA

URBAN REDEVELOPMENT OF SENTUL

DECENTRUM CITY, BANGI

SUMMERGLADES, CYBERJAYA



INTERVIEWS WITH BUDIMAN HENDROPURNOMO & Ar RAZIN MAHMOOD / PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE FORUM, KLDF & DATUM:KL 2013 / THE SILENT POWER OF DIAGRAMS / STUDENT WORKS AA (UK), IUM & UPM / OTHER RECENT PROJECT: ASEAN BINTULU FERTILIZER

ASEAN BINTULU FERTILIZER

The new administrative building for Asean Bintulu Fertilizer

intentionally retains the building's old structure to celebrate its past while enhancing the structure with progressive new ideas.

The client, Asean Bintulu Fertilizer (ABF), is a joint venture between five Asean countries namely Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, and Singapore. The ABF plant produces anhydrous ammonia and granular urea that are used in fertilizers among other products. Located in Bintulu, the plant is one of the largest urea plants in Asia, providing employment to over 1,000 local citizens.

ABF's new administrative building is situated in Bintulu, a coastal town about 650 kilometres from Kuching, and the main industrial

centre in Sarawak. In 2008, Asean Bintulu Fertilizer (ABF) decided to build a new administration building, as their existing premises that was built in the 1980s was no longer viable to cater for the growing workforce. The brief called for an office space designed for 200 staff members entailing flexibility and energy efficiency – the usual hallmarks of a modern and progressive work environment.

The existing building was originally planned for demolition, and the new one built on the cleared site. This was requested by the client, due to the clustery

design of the pre-existing building blocks, water leakages in the buildings, and the unfavourable working atmosphere where the interiors were dim and claustrophobic because of the dark tinted windows and low ceilings. The architecture of the entire existing complex is reminiscent of an eighties' resort hotel with its terracotta coloured roof tile façades. The existing site was cradled by low hills with mature trees; relative low-lying when compared to its surroundings.

From the onset, the architect worked out that the new offices



would have to be roughly four-storeys high to accommodate the number of staff. There would be a sub-basement car park directly under this building to provide for the car parking spaces required. However, the architects were hesitant as to whether the existing building needed to be demolished, as it formed part of the site's history. After deliberating on the design and site context, the architect decided to partially demolish the existing structures and to merge them (in appearance and function) with the new 4-storey administrative building.

The new building houses all the departments in an open plan work environment, with support facilities such as meeting rooms, rest areas and amenities, while the existing 2-storey buildings house communal facilities such as the medical centre, gym and library. With the demolition of the front portion of the existing buildings, a new open space was created that would serve as the forecourt to the new administrative building. This open space works in conjunction with the 2-storey entrance lobby to the east of the site, to project a corporate identity for ABF.

In addition, the architect

expanded the brief to include the following criteria:

- A. It must reflect the site's personal history and relate well with the existing buildings on site;
- B. The new building must be energy efficient, flexible in its planning and sustainable in its use of resources;
- C. The building must project a contemporary image befitting ABF's position in the business world; and
- D. There must be communal spaces to promote ABF's strong sense of community with the infusion of nature into the design.

The main design idea that shaped the new administrative building is to recognize and retain the site's history, and this was manifested via the utilization of the pre-existing structures to enhance the new. This would help to reflect the timeline that has shaped ABF as a corporate and community builder to this present day.

For the new administrative building, a rectilinear floor plan was adopted, with the long elevations facing North-South to reduce heat gain and glare. The typical

floor plan can be broadly divided into two sections; the open plan work space that overlooks the planted hillside due north while the shared spaces such as meeting rooms and pantries, are located along the north face facing the tree court and plaza.

This clear distinction of floor space is closely linked to the usage of finishes; work spaces have raised access floor systems to maximise flexibility in the layout, while the communal spaces use robust materials such as tiles and timber in the sky terraces. The open floor work spaces allow for better infiltration of natural daylight; reducing the usage of artificial lighting. The lights are designed to switch in rows along the length of the building – meaning that the workstations along the windows can choose not to turn on the lights and depend on natural daylight for most of the day. Work spaces are also partially compartmentalised into departments, which are demarcated by the 'pods' of roomed offices. These pods are used to segregate the air-conditioning system per floor into four zones; cool air is ducted along the ceiling of these offices to be turned on only when required.

While the new 4-storey administrative building is designed as a 'hard-working' and efficient space, it does not convey ABF's corporate identity on its own. The accompanying entrance lobby building was thus designed to present the identity as this is the first place most visitors (and all staff) arrive at when visiting ABF – and was therefore designed at a grander scale with a richer palette of materials.

Despite the cramped work environment in the existing office building – staff morale was generally high. This is because the management promotes a transparent and an empowering type of self-management with emphasis on strong work communities. Hence, the architect felt that the architecture of the new administration building needed to reflect this. Discussion areas are provided in between clusters of work stations, while meeting rooms are provided for departments to meet, and each floor has a pantry that opens onto the sky terrace.

Outside the building – in the planted forecourt, the plaza serves as a communal space of larger groups. The light poles in the plaza are spaced to allow insertion of

The new office building seen in relation to the existing buildings on site

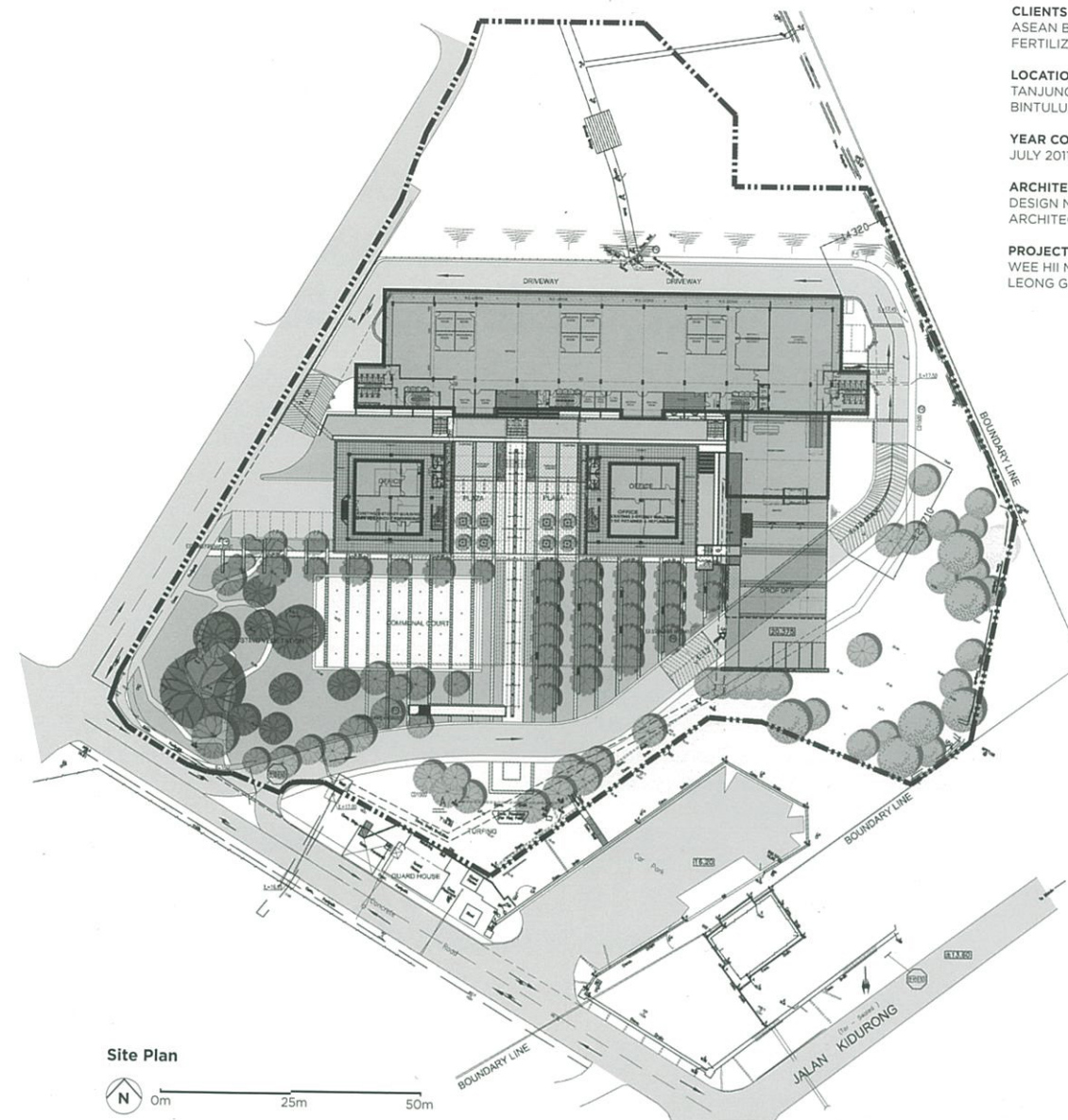


Sky terraces with visual links between floors





Pre-function lounge



Site Plan

0m 25m 50m

CLIENTS
ASEAN BINTULU
FERTILIZER SDN BHD

LOCATION
TANJUNG KIDURONG,
BINTULU, SARAWAK

YEAR COMPLETED
JULY 2011

ARCHITECT
DESIGN NETWORK
ARCHITECTS SDN BHD

PROJECT TEAM
WEE HII MIN,
LEONG GIAN WEN

SITE AREA
16,187.43 SQM

BUILT-UP AREA
7,310 SQM

C&S ENGINEER
CHT JURUNDING

M&E ENGINEER
PERUNDING
DYNATECH

QUANTITY SURVEYOR
KPK QUANTITY
SURVEYORS
(SARAWAK) SDN BHD

INTERIOR DESIGNER
DESIGN NETWORK
ARCHITECTS SDN BHD

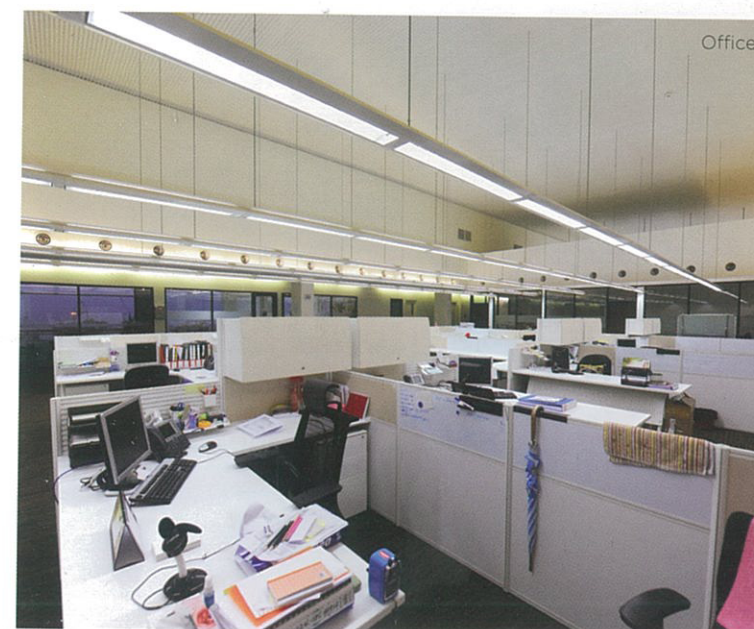
LANDSCAPING
TROPOXCAPE DESIGN

CONTRACTOR
PEMBINAAN TAJRI
SDN BHD

PHOTOGRAPHER
LAU MING NGI

tents during festive occasions. In the entrance lobby, nature in the form of water comes into the building and blends the division between inside and outside.

As a whole, the architects felt that ABF's new administrative building shows how existing structures on a project site can be incorporated into new designs without compromising the new or old. In fact, the inclusion of the existing structures meant that the new building is located further from the entrance road, which gives it a sense of formality as one approaches it. The forecourt created by the demolition of the two front blocks adds gravity to this formality and place-making. /am



Offices



Main lobby