

# Menard's four decades of standing history leading into Greater KL

**Driven by Asia's rapid economic growth and the need for new infrastructure, the construction project sector contributes 13.5% of the world's output, according to the Global Construction 2025 Report. In light of this booming industry, the Malaysian Government continues to initiate improvements and implementation of high-impact infrastructure projects, allocating more funding to infrastructure than any other sectors to boost the country's economic growth. Part of the contribution comes from the expertise of multinational companies (MNCs), such as Menard, a French company that delivers complete design-build foundation systems using ground improvement techniques.**

**M**enard, part of Soletanche Freyssinet - a subsidiary of Vinci Group (the world's leading concession and construction conglomerate with 38.7 billion euros in annual revenue, as of 2014) has performed works for famous French landmarks as well as Malaysia's Petronas Twin Towers.

Menard's presence in Southeast Asia stretches back nearly 40 years, performing its first major projects in Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam among others. With the region's rapid industrialisation, and sufficient opportunities in infrastructure developments, Menard has chosen Greater KL as the ideal location to establish its Asia Regional Hub. The office serves as a business, innovation and talent hub for its Asian operations supporting countries such as Brunei, Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam.

"Our company has been active in Malaysia and Southeast Asia since the end 70s. Initially, we were here on a project basis and later on decided to remain permanently in Greater KL. It is the city's location and competitive advantages that makes it such an attractive proposition for a regional hub" says Gilles Costa, Managing Director of Menard Asia.

Greater KL's well located central position in Southeast Asia is one of the reasons why Menard chose to have its regional hub in the city. "The ease of doing business attracted us and the support from the Malaysian government played a role. Also, the city offers us a very pleasant living environment where the cost of accommodation is reasonable, comparing with its neighbours such as Singapore or Hong Kong," he added.

InvestKL, a government agency mandated to attract large multinational companies played an important role in Menard's setup. "InvestKL has been a helpful partner. They supported our plans and bridged us with the relevant government agencies. At a time when we did not have full understanding on procedures and legislations, InvestKL provided guidance and facilitation, making it an easy transition for us," says Gilles.

## ATTRACTING & NURTURING THE RIGHT TALENTS

The strategic establishment of the regional hub in Greater KL will not only improve the level of expertise, overall productivity, efficiency and effectiveness of the construction industry in Malaysia, but the company envisions a transfer of knowledge that will benefit local talents by supporting projects in Malaysia and overseas.

"The expats here are tutors and provide guidance to the locals" he explains. "We are going through a transition period, where we need to recruit, train and develop talents to deliver a consistent standard of service to the different markets."

As a global provider in a niche market, the company hopes to attract and nurture talents with specialised expertise such as in the area of geotechnical engineering, civil engineering and health, safety and environment. With university collaborations already in the pipeline, Menard also offers internship programmes, diploma sponsorships and other enrichment programmes.

Employing the right talent is very important to Menard's operations. Menard believes that Greater KL has the right talent with skills competency to serve its operations. "The advantage of the local talent here is the level of English, which is higher than its neighbouring countries like Thailand or Indonesia," explains Gilles. "The universities in the country are good and produce a lot of talented people with technical expertise."

## BENEFITTING MALAYSIANS

Already in the soils are three young Malaysians who have worked in Menard for many years, experienced a career growth and currently holding regional roles. Sharing their personal journeys of transition, they have one thing in common - a passion for the industry.

"The technical expertise that comes from working exposure with an international company is invaluable" says Project Manager, Mohamad Fashan, who graduated from Universiti Putra Malaysia in Civil Engineering. Fashan started with Menard in 2002 as a junior engineer, before deciding to pursue a local company for five years. He then returned to Menard as a Project Engineer and was promoted to a Site/Project Manager with regional responsibilities.

"I like working with huge machineries, especially with state-of-art technology. That's my passion" says Fashan. In response to why he chose to work with Menard "This is an international company which is at the forefront of technological advances. I wanted to gain the exposure in terms of how Menard manage major international projects as compared to local companies."

"It's been eight years, but every day is so rewarding". Fashan em-



Setting a strong foundation - one of Menard's local projects in Subang, Selangor



**Gilles: It is the city's location and competitive advantages that makes it such an attractive proposition for a regional hub**



Three young Malaysians with a passion for the industry - Richard, Fashan and Vicky

phasize on the importance of on-the job training, involving project and people management which has provided him intensive exposure and improved his technical capabilities.

Menard's Regional Technical Director, Richard Ong left Menard twice and has recently returned for the third time. Richard took up Geotechnical Engineering in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, even though it was the least popular subject.

"Geotechnical engineering was not enrolled by many students, but I saw it as an opportunity. It's a very specialized field, and I knew this talent will be in great demand," he says.

Richard seized the opportunity, graduating as a top student in the faculty of civil engineering in year 2000. His career started with Menard as a project engineer for nine months before deciding to continue his studies. When asked about why he returned to Menard after leaving twice, Richard explains it's the experience. The company has good technology and I think there's tremendous growth potential.

This enthusiastic attitude is also shared by Menard's Regional Health Safety and Environment (HSE) manager, Vicky Nathan. The former DJ studied accounting, certificated with an ACCA degree but developed an interest in Health and Safety after meeting a Japanese national from the manufacturing and construction sector.

"Having been in this field for a couple of years, I can see that Menard's operations is of high standard. Menard practices legally competent safety guides of very high standards and it's been a great learning experience," he explains.

Vicky added that Menard adopts practises that main contractors use, despite being a subcontractor. "We are trying to implement the OHSAS (18001) system. It is used to standardise the documentation and presentation of all the countries that Menard operates in, so that it meets different countries' safety guidelines. This system is equivalent to ISO certification for safety."

Having been in Menard for only ten months, Vicky also says that the company has a culture of rewarding talent. "In Menard, if you have talent, they will send you to different countries for opportunities and gain exposures to what projects are like in different places around the globe."

## FOR THE LONG TERM

Menard has plans to remain in Greater KL for the foreseeable future, because of the nature of its projects in the region which is sustainable for the long-term. Gilles is optimistic as the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) sets to transform the city, creating new developments and opportunities for diversified ground improvement projects.

"Greater KL's strategic location in the centre of ASEAN provides an edge as it is of close proximity to many of our clients and projects. We are more accessible to the business opportunities and able to expand and support our operations across the region from Greater KL," says Gilles.

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InvestKL is a government initiative to attract and facilitate global multinationals investment into Greater Kuala Lumpur