

# Opinions vary on property

## Research houses have different takes on real estate

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### PROPERTY

**PETALING JAYA:** With the focus on the recovery of the Malaysian economy, three different brokers have each come out with their own view on the property market.

Maybank Research is effervescent, saying “the worst seems to be over” for the property sector and the low interest rate environment would nudge buyers to buy.

The various measures offered by developers and the government will “boost” demand. It is calling for an upgrade of the sector.

RHB prefers to stay on a safe territory by hanging on to the high-speed rail (HSR) line. It is awaiting the government’s call on the high-speed rail by year’s end.

The current proposal is for the HSR to end in Johor Baru instead of Singapore and develop-

ers with land and projects running alongside the rail line will benefit.

The RHB report said employment issues would affect lending. It expects property sales to grow at a modest 10% in 2021. RHB is neutral on the sector.

UOB Kay Hian is circumspect as long as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to cloud the economic horizon, vaccine or no vaccine. As long as macroeconomics data point to a murky outlook in 2021, “property sales are not expected to rebound significantly,” especially with the escalating property overhang, UOB Kay Hian said in a report.

The first half of 2021 will remain challenging with “property sales continuing to stagnate.”

The report said most developers are putting their brakes on new launches for 2021 as their aim is to clear existing inventories, which have been rising.

This has forced developers to make impairments to match demand, UOB Kay Hian said. The Home Ownership Campaign (HOC), which ran throughout 2019, resumed on June 1 this year and will run until May 31, 2021.

But the typical goodies like stamp duty exemptions for the memorandum of transfer documents and loan agreements will go on until Dec 2025, under the Penjana stimulus package. That effectively means the HOC rewards and goodies will go on for seven years, starting 2019 to 2025.

Despite lacklustre sales in 2021, it expects earnings to rebound by 51.6% in 2021 after a 41.1% contraction in 2020 due to the low-base effect.

### EXCHANGE RATE

Bank Negara’s best available quotations by commercial banks of Kuala Lumpur at 5pm on Dec 16, 2020

#### UNITS OF FOREIGN CURRENCY PER UNIT OF MALAYSIAN RINGGIT

|                                       | Buying OD | Selling OD |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| US dollar                             | 0.2465    | 0.2467     |
| Sterling                              | 0.1824    | 0.1827     |
| Singapore dollar                      | 0.3277    | 0.3280     |
| Yen 100:                              | 25.4671   | 25.4996    |
| Euro:                                 | 0.2019    | 0.2021     |
| Chinese Renminbi:                     | 1.6087    | 1.6109     |
| Ringgit Malaysia per foreign currency |           |            |

#### OPENING RATES BY MAYBANK ON DEC 16, 2020

|                       | SELLING TT/OD | BUYING TT | BUYING OD |
|-----------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 US Dollar           | 4.1130        | 3.9860    | 3.9760    |
| 1 Australian Dollar   | 3.1220        | 2.9970    | 2.9810    |
| 1 Brunei Dollar       | 3.0840        | 2.9930    | 2.9850    |
| 1 Canadian Dollar     | 3.2330        | 3.1450    | 3.1330    |
| 1 Euro                | 5.0030        | 4.8390    | 4.8190    |
| 1 New Zealand Dollar  | 2.9240        | 2.8160    | 2.8000    |
| 1 Singapore Dollar    | 3.0840        | 2.9930    | 2.9850    |
| 1 Sterling Pound      | 5.5330        | 5.3560    | 5.3360    |
| 1 Swiss Franc         | 4.6290        | 4.5170    | 4.5020    |
| 100 UAE Dirham        | 113.2500      | 107.3300  | 107.1300  |
| 100 Bangladesh Taka   | 4.9440        | 4.6110    | 4.4110    |
| 100 Danish Krone      | 68.9200       | 63.3800   | 63.1800   |
| 100 Hongkong Dollar   | 53.6100       | 50.9200   | 50.7200   |
| 100 Indian Rupee      | 5.6800        | 5.3300    | 5.1300    |
| 100 Indonesian Rupiah | 0.0302        | 0.0272    | 0.0222    |
| 100 Japanese Yen      | 3.9710        | 3.8450    | 3.8350    |
| 100 Norwegian Krone   | 48.3900       | 44.5000   | 44.3000   |
| 100 Pakistan Rupee    | 2.6100        | 2.4400    | 2.2400    |
| 100 Philippine Peso   | 8.6800        | 8.1700    | 7.9700    |
| 100 Qatar Riyal       | 114.1500      | 108.3700  | 108.1700  |
| 100 Saudi Riyal       | 110.8200      | 105.2000  | 105.0000  |
| 100 South Africa Rand | 28.6300       | 25.8400   | 25.6400   |
| 100 Sri Lanka Rupee   | 2.2600        | 2.0700    | 1.8700    |
| 100 Swedish Krona     | 50.5900       | 46.0200   | 45.8200   |
| 100 Thai Baht         | 14.3200       | 12.6900   | 12.2900   |

## LKL unit signs distributorship deal with Komark Mask

**KUALA LUMPUR:** LKL International Bhd’s (LKLIB) subsidiary, LKL Advance Metaltech Sdn Bhd (LKLAM), has signed a distributorship agreement with Komarkcorp Bhd’s subsidiary, Komark Mask (M) Sdn Bhd, to sell and distribute Komark Mask’s disposable medical

grade face masks worldwide.

In a filing with Bursa Malaysia, LKLIB said both parties targeted to secure a significant slice of the regional market for the disposable masks and personal protective equipment (PPE), which researchers have projected to

grow up to US\$2bil by 2026.

“With growing reticence from Western economies to purchase China-made masks due to quality assurances and the ongoing trade war, Malaysia has the opportunity to stamp its mark on the global PPE and dis-

posal masks market.”

LKLIB is a market leader in supplying medical beds, healthcare accessories and other medical peripheral products, and has developed markets across 30 countries. — Bernama

# NOVARTIS BIG ON TALENT GROWTH



**PETALING JAYA:** Novartis Corp (M) Sdn Bhd, a leading a healthcare company with expertise in science and innovation, sees talent development as an integral part in strengthening its brand and being a global player.

As an organisation with a purpose to improve and extend people’s lives, Novartis country president, Patrik Grande said talent building is very important in the organisation. He says the activity itself creates half the value for any organisation, as individuals are driven by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

“Intrinsic motivation will drive higher engagement, which ultimately drives productivity and talent retention. One of the several key drivers of intrinsic motivation is one’s sense of progress in the organisation.

“By placing an importance in learning and having the curiosity to discover and create, our associates will learn through experiments and eventually accomplish and build new competencies and progress in their career,” he told StarBiz.

Grande said Novartis complemented this with structured development programs through a series of blended and experiential learning, as well as cross-border assignments to prepare its talents for future roles.

“In 2019, we made progress into our cultural transformation, which was a strategic priority for Novartis. This included ensuring our associates felt inspired by our purpose, encouraging them to be constantly curious about new ideas to improve health outcomes and strive to create an inspired, curious and unbossed (ICU) culture to unleash the power

of our people.

“We believe that by nurturing this culture of ICU, we are able to unleash the talent and creativity of our people that will drive the company’s innovation, performance and reputation, as well as bring us nearer to our purpose to reimagine medicines.”

Grande noted that even before the start of the pandemic, Novartis had been keeping up with the world of digital and technological transformation.

InvestKL, a government investment promotion agency under MITI Malaysia, facilitated Novartis in its expansion to host its Global Shared Services hub for APAC in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2015.

Novartis is a testament of a multinational company’s strong commitment to talent growth, which provides high value job opportunities, knowledge and skills transfers expertise to Malaysia’s dynamic young talent.

“Since 2018, we have launched many digital learning platform to provide our associates with access to learning such as Digital Awareness Hub in 2018 to demystify digital technology and provide free access to online courses by Coursera, LinkedIn Learning and UP4Growth in 2019.”

The programs can be accessed 24/7, and features user-driven learning, as associates are empowered to choose the type of learning or trainings they are interested in.

“This platform has been beneficial for us, as from January this year, we have recorded more than 42,000 hours of learning by all of our associates.”

Winner of the TalentCorp “Life at Work 2019” Award, Grande asserted that winning the accolade not only increases Novartis’ standing as an employer of choice, but also as one of the leading international pharmaceutical companies in Malaysia.

“Coupled with the “Top Employer 2020 Award,” it is a testament to our commitment to provide the best working environment for all our associates across all divisions here

in Malaysia. We believe these recognitions can attract the best talents to join Novartis as we continue to reimagine medicine.

“Most importantly, it drives our motivation to stay true to our culture in nurturing talents, inspire us to continuously support our associates and to relentlessly work towards our goal to grow talents that are not only knowledgeable, but have a deep sense of purpose in improving lives of others.”

Going forward, Grande said Novartis will continue its commitment in its ongoing initiatives both internally and externally.

“We will continue to grow our engagement with the government to support in strengthening the healthcare sector and stay agile in providing world class services to our Novartis divisions around the world.

“The pandemic has put us through a steep learning curve in finding new ways of working and having the agility to build new competencies.”

InvestKL CEO Muhammad Azmi Zulkifli stated: “KL and Malaysia’s ecosystem continues to cater to high impact, high value and high tech MNCs with a pro-business administration who is ready to open doors for business and readily serves the needs of potential MNC investors despite the pandemic.”

Currently, Novartis has over 700 associates in Malaysia under different divisions - Novartis Pharmaceuticals, Oncology, Sandoz and Novartis Shared Services. Over 500 of its associates work under Novartis Global Service Centre Kuala Lumpur where, they support operations for more than 20 countries. The group has been in Malaysia since the 1970s.

“Malaysia offers a conducive business environment like advance infrastructure and digital connectivity, quality of living conditions and impressive multilingual and culturally diverse talent pool,” said Grande.

“Furthermore, its strategic location provides us with seamless con-

nectivity to our other offices across the emerging South-East Asia region. Another factor is Malaysia identifies healthcare as one of the key areas to generate economic growth and continues to invest in advancing healthcare infrastructure, improve access to innovative medicines and promote healthcare tourism.”

Grande added that Novartis chose Kuala Lumpur as its regional headquarters due to its reputation as a major regional hub with many diversified industries.

“As we continue to reimagine medicines, we understand the power of data and emerging digital technologies, as well as its importance in reshaping the healthcare landscape in the future. Hence, as we evolve with the digital revolution, having our hub in a city like Kuala Lumpur that is pivoting towards next-generation digital industries was in line with our growth plans.

“Additionally, having a hub here provided us with attractive and multiple tax incentives that allowed us to reinvest our capital into the people that matters most, namely, our associates.”

Going forward, Grande said Novartis will continue its commitment in developing talents, by providing opportunities to local talents to grow in their career by working in the company.

“With 15 different nationalities working among us, we are proud of our culture of diversity and inclusion. We welcome talents that are inspired to serve better lives for Malaysians.”

Azmi concludes, “We are very pleased of Kuala Lumpur’s long-standing history of attracting high value, high impact MNCs such as Novartis to set up regional services hub here, notwithstanding with InvestKL’s recent achievement of crossing the 100 MNCs milestone. I am confident Kuala Lumpur’s diverse multilingual talent, strategic location, IR4.0 driven economy and solid infrastructure will continue to attract more investors.”

Novartis country president Patrik Grande