

## **Seberang Prai becomes popular**

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By DAVID TAN

THE Seberang Prai residential property market is facing robust demand in both the landed and high-rise segments.

Two key developers in Seberang Prai have lined up for launching, in the first quarter of this year, some 486 units of landed residential properties with an estimated gross sales value of RM156mil to meet the rising needs of those with the disposable income to upgrade their lifestyle.

Artist impression of the Pearl Garden project, launched last September, sold about 70% in a matter of weeks.

Over the past two years, the investments brought in by multinational corporations such as Ibiden, Honeywell International, National Instruments, St Jude Medical, and First Solar have created an executive class of home seekers.

The projects are the second and third phases of Pearl Garden, with a gross sales value of RM71mil, developed by Tambun Indah Development Sdn Bhd and Phase 2 of RM85mil Bukit Mertajam Utama by DNP Land Sdn Bhd.

The Pearl Garden, a joint venture project with Mutiara Goodyear Development Bhd, comprises 446 units of double-storey terraced, semi-detached, and bungalow houses on a 67.9-acre land in Simpang Ampat, about 20km from the Penang Bridge.

The first phase, launched last September, was about 70% sold (175 units) in a matter of weeks.

“Most of our buyers are those who want to own landed property but could not do so on the island. The second and third phases, comprising 271 double-storey terraced and semi-detached houses, was launched mid-February,” says Tambun Indah general manager Teh Theng Theng.

The Pearl Garden is a gated and guarded project, with 24-hour security, and comes with a double-storey clubhouse and recreational facilities such as a swimming pool, a gymnasium, jogging track, and a community hall. The selling price for the properties ranged between RM238,000 and RM512,000.

“We are also arranging for a special financing package that provides 90% financing and allows purchasers to pay the 10% instalments over a 12-month period. Depending on the size and type of unit, the monthly instalment starts from RM400 per month,” Teh adds.

The RM85mil Bukit Mertajam Utama, comprising 215 units of double-storey terraced and semi-detached houses, is located on a 56-acre site in Bukit Mertajam, about 3km from the Penang Bridge.

The terraced and semi-detached houses have respective built-up areas of 1,900sq ft and 2,700sq ft priced at RM328,000 and RM468,000.

DNP Land (North) general manager K.C. Tan says about 60% of Bukit Mertajam Utama, scheduled for official launch in March, were sold during the soft launch last month.

“Landed properties in Seberang Prai, which are priced about 40% lower than landed homes on the island, will always find a strong market in the young executives with a combined household income of over RM6,000,” he says.

As for the high-rise condominium market, that too seems to be getting increasingly popular in Seberang Prai, a territory known for its affordable landed residential homes.



*Fook Tone Huat ... Most mainland buyers look for properties priced 40% below the landed properties on the island.*

More than 10 years ago, high-rise residential properties were not that sought after, Henry Butcher Malaysia (Seberang Prai) senior manager Fook Tone Huat tells StarBizWeek.

“Most of the buyers on the mainland looked for landed homes which were priced about 40% below the landed properties on the island.

“About three years ago, high-rise properties in Jalan Raja Uda and Jalan Telaga Air, in Butterworth, started to do well. The original selling price, which started off from about RM160,000 for a unit with over 1,000sq ft in built-up area, has risen over 30% over the past three years to around RM210,000 and RM230,000 today,” he says.

The Cassia Resort Condominiums by Island LandCap Properties and the Vista Bay Condominiums by Cendana Realty Sdn Bhd are two such projects launched three years ago in the heart of Butterworth town that has seen such appreciation.

For this reason, there are already three high-rise residential projects that will be launched by the middle of this year; Island LandCap’s Pinang Laguna Water Park Condo and Airmas Development’s apartment Telaga Emas by the first quarter of this year and Dahlia Park in mid-2010.

The largest of these scheme is the RM160mil Pinang Laguna Water Park Condo, located in Seberang Jaya, comprising about 1,000 units, with over 1,000sq ft in built-up areas, priced from RM180,000 onwards.

The Dahlia Park, located near Jalan Bagan Luar, at the heart of Butterworth town, comprises 140 condominium units with built-up areas ranging between 1,307sq ft and 1,726 sq ft. These will be priced from RM190,000 onwards. Dahlia Park is equipped with comprehensive clubhouse facilities.

The Apartment Telaga Emas, located at Jalan Telaga Air, Butterworth, comprises 144 units with built-up areas of 1,327 sq ft priced from RM197,000 onwards. The scheme is equipped with amenities such as a swimming pool, sauna and round-the-clock security.

“High-rise properties have become popular because of their affordable pricing, and because of the facilities that come with them. In comparison, landed properties, which have been appreciating at about 10% per annum, are now priced over RM300,000 for a double-storey terraced unit with built-up area of 1,600sq ft and a 1,400sq ft land area.

“This means that only households, with a combined income of over RM5,000, and who are willing to borrow to the maximum, can take up loans for such housing projects. Landed property prices are expected to go up by another 10% this year,” he says.

Island LandCap Properties executive chairman Oon Weng Boon says the high-rise properties in Butterworth could sell well if they are strategically located and offer a full range of recreational facilities.

“Our Cassia Resort Condominium sold well because it was centrally located in Butterworth town, on Jalan Raja Uda, and had various clubhouse facilities. Furthermore, the pricing of Cassia Resort Condominium which was around RM160,000 then, was affordable for many households with a combined income between RM3,500 and RM4,000,” he says.

Oon says the Pinang Laguna Water Park Condo project was the group’s first attempt to infuse theme-park concept with condominium lifestyle living in Seberang Prai.

“This adds value to the project, making it more attractive to house buyers, especially those with families. During the soft launch preview last month, we have already received bookings for about 50% of the first phase, comprising 350 condominiums. The second phase is scheduled for launching in the second half of this year,” he says.