



Website: **W W W . w c t . c o m . m y**





ALONG THE EARTH ROAD

The WCT Story | 1981 – 2011

An Authorised History



DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the men and women who tirelessly work the miles here at WCT, and to all those who have in more ways than one been associated with our walk in history, although it is not possible to mention each by name. WCT takes this opportunity to record its appreciation of them, and in a special way, of our customers and stakeholders whose invaluable support made real what had begun only as a dream.

ALONG THE EARTH ROAD

The WCT Story | 1981 – 2011

An Authorised History

Published by WCT Berhad

in January 2011, Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan, MALAYSIA

Along the Earth Road

The WCT Story | 1981 – 2011

An Authorised History

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ANNIVERSARY SYMBOL

The 30th anniversary symbol refrains WCT's celebration of three excellent decades in the construction and infrastructure industry. The design embodies the spirit of going beyond set borders.

The choice of the star icon alludes to the strive for excellence. The three stars symbolise 30 dynamic years of consistent effort.

The colour of choice is red. Besides being the main component colour of the company logo it is also the colour of celebration.

The anniversary symbol serves as a rallying point for all in the company to keep building with diligence, innovation and integrity.

Disclaimer

The images of various constructed landmarks and buildings included in this book in association with WCT Berhad are only for purposes of illustrating one or more aspects of the company's involvement with that particular construction, variously as subcontractor, main contractor, joint-venture partner or a combination of these roles, and intended for viewing pleasure only. It is in no way intended to misrepresent the information that WCT is responsible for the overall construction of the entire project. The exact involvement of WCT Berhad in each instance is accurately referred to in the written text.

Cover design by June Wan | About the cover design

Composite image of WCT's historic first machine, the Caterpillar (CAT) 950 and current earthworks at the Low Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT), Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA 2).

A lone worker and the wheel loader traverse the earth furrows that have their vanishing point low on the horizon. The radiating sun rays preside over all.

The image of one small machine against the vastness of sky and earth, depicts the company's fortuitous march over 30 years, telling of struggle and blessedness in one expansive picture.

The colour spectrum moves around the corporate red.

Welcome to this walk in words and images of 30 years of WCT history.

As I reflect on WCT Berhad's journey of the last 30 years, and where it stands today, remarkable just about describes what this company has achieved.

We started as a one-machine company involved in earthworks back in 1981. From this humble beginning, WCT has evolved into a global brand, recognized for its ability to deliver world-class quality.

This company has grown from strength to strength, expanding its scope and expertise that today cut across the whole spectrum of the construction industry. We have raised the bar, successfully venturing abroad and earning ourselves the accolade of becoming the only company in the world to have completed three Formula 1 racing circuits.

WCT has shown that, though we started small, we are a company that can deliver. This is largely because we have a team of dedicated and loyal employees, guided by a top management that has shown tenacity and perseverance during the challenging periods in the company's history.

Thirty years is indeed a major milestone, and we are proud with what we have achieved.

What we are today is shaped by events in the past.

This commemorative book chronicles our journey, stories of challenges and successes. And above all, it is about the human spirit, the "never say die" attitude and the determination to succeed.

I hope that just like me, you will find the stories not just illuminating, but also inspiring.

DATO' CAPT. AHMAD SUFIAN IN INFORMAL POSE AND HAPPY MOOD.



Dato' Capt. Ahmad Sufian | Chairman, WCT Berhad
Shah Alam, January 2011



Working the earth, WCT has trod a long and hard road – dismal miles interspersed with astounding vistas. This has been one incredible odyssey.

The travellers of the earth road, some there from the very beginning, and others who joined later, can all attest to the *suin-lat-fu-thim* while on it. The sour-pungent-bitter-sweet tastes that sum up life have likewise coursed through the tastebuds of WCT the company.

The volume you are about to read chronicles aspects of the time and space at WCT spanning 30 years. This book sets out to recount the birth and experiences of the company as truthfully and sincerely as is possible. The stories are humbling as they are inspiring. People say that travellers tell tales from which the next generation draw valuable life lessons. Hence this publication.

The accounts inside celebrate the best attributes of the human being – because to the last person on the earth road, the travellers swear they could not have made it this far without vision, tenacity, loyalty and above all, the immense capacity to suffer deprivation. How else to continue on the tough road if not for these strengths that they could find within them?

As with all travels, the highlights were there too, complete with banquet meals in marbled halls whenever fortune smiled. As with now, 30 years to the day when four friends – two Wong brothers together with Chan and Taing pulled together their modest life savings, purchased the company's first machine, a ten-ton Caterpillar wheel loader and rolled into corporate history.

Along the Earth Road raises a toast to all who traverse the winding miles and undulating terrains, sometimes carrying nothing more than just faith and fortitude for the journey.

Opposite page: WCT WORKSITE
AT THE LOW COST CARRIER
TERMINAL (LCCT), KUALA
LUMPUR INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT (KLIA 2), SEPANG,
OCTOBER 2010.

Central to the WCT story has
been its machines, and the
men behind them, physically
and metaphorically treading
the earth road in rain and
shine. The *Jalur Gemilang*
flutters prominently denoting
the company as homegrown
and embodying the nation's
propensity for diligence and
pride in its heritage.

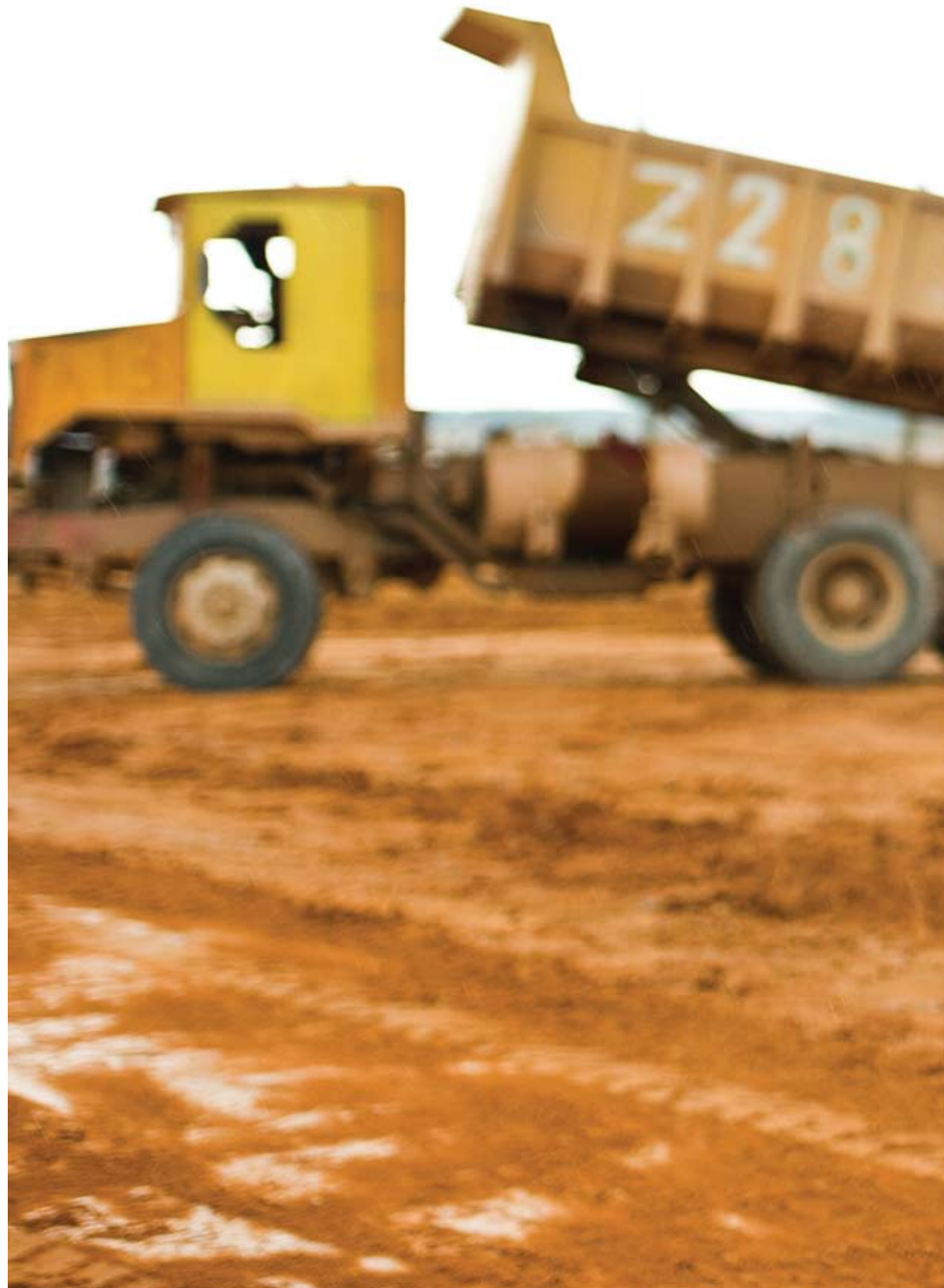
June Wan, Editor | Shah Alam | January 2011

AT THE LCCT WORKSITE, WONG SEWE WING, COMPANY CO-FOUNDER AND RECENTLY-RETIRED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (CENTRE) SHARES CAMARADERIE WITH SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER LIM SWEE HOCK (LEFT) AND PROJECT DIRECTOR MOHD ROSLAN BIN SARIP (RIGHT)

For Wong, not much in the work day has changed except that he no longer visits HQ as often as before.

Doing what he does best, he is at the worksite daily to make sure that operations flow smoothly and that the crew perform at optimum efficiency.

In the fraternity there is a tale often told of a younger-day Wong, squat-hunched over a pile of stubbed-out cigarette ends, mentally grappling with the many hiccups that are part and parcel of the construction and infrastructure industry. That he no longer reaches for the next drag (Wong has given up chain-smoking!) attests to a gentler way of life for him now that WCT has accomplished what it has in the thirty years of its existence.







Opposite top: WORK CREW
DELIBERATE THE OPTIONS IN THE
IMPENDING STORM.

Opposite bottom: A BROODING SKY
BACKDROPS BUILDINGS AT THE KLIA.

Below: THE EARTH ROAD STORY IS
ABOUT MAN, MACHINE, RAW EARTH
AND OPEN SKY.



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a l b u m -

H E A D Q U A R T E R S





WCT'S HQ IN SHAH ALAM, SELANGOR: January 2011 marks 30 eventful years for the company enacted as WCT Earthworks and Building Contractors Sdn Bhd in 1981. The name was later changed to WCT Engineering Berhad in 1995 when it was listed and quoted on the second board of Bursa Malaysia Securities and moved to the main board in January 1999.

Another name change took place in June 2008, this time – WCT Berhad – to reflect the diverse activities of the company around that time till currently.





Opposite page, top row from left:
ISO 14001: 2004 ENVIRONMENTAL
MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS CERTIFICATION.

ISO 9001: 2000
QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS
CERTIFICATION.

OHSAS 18001:1999
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY
MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS CERTIFICATION.

Bottom row: BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETING, NOVEMBER 2010.

Near left: *THE EDGE'S* BILLION RINGGIT
CLUB CERTIFICATION, 2010.

Far Left: CONGRATULATORY PLAQUE
FROM TRACTORS MALAYSIA ON WCT'S
ISO CERTIFICATION

Quote on Quality Policy inscribed on a plaque in HQ:

WCT has established, documented, implemented
and maintained a Quality Management System in accordance with
the requirements of ISO 9001:2000, which will pave the way to
continuous improvement and sustainable
growth to satisfy our customers and
shareholders, as well as maintain a mutually
beneficial relationship with our suppliers and subcontractors.

Signed: Taing Kim Hwa, 5 June 2008



Opposite page:
AND1 BASKETBALL CHALLENGE.
In support of healthy activities
among youth, WCT sponsors
various events such as this held in
Bandar Bukit Tinggi, Klang.

Below: SAFETY AWARENESS
CAMPAIGN AT A PROJECT SITE. At
every site, the Project Team ensures
that a Safety Plan is in place and
strictly enforced to ensure the
highest standards of occupational
safety and health.

Quote on Safety and Health inscribed on a plaque in HQ

WCT Management's philosophy towards
safety and health is "SAFETY FIRST" ...
**Prevention of injury
and ill health** to all persons
at our work place shall be our **major
responsibility.**





Congratulation

WCT
Engineering Berhad

THE MALAYSIAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AWARDS

MS ISO 9002 REG. No. AR. 2274

Heartiest Congratulation

to

WCT

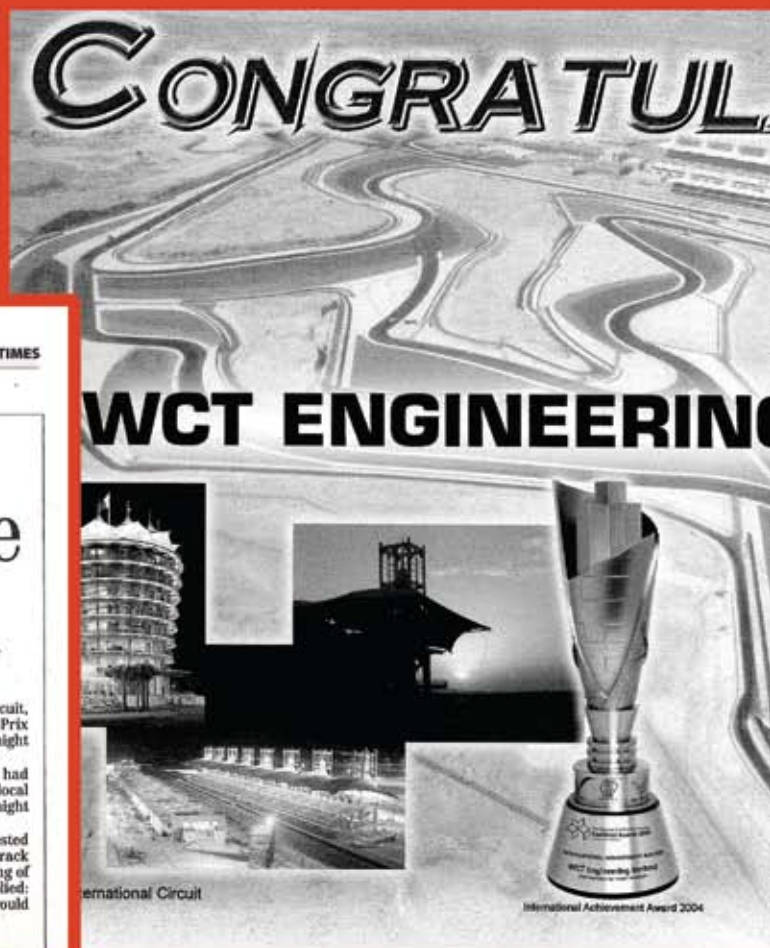
WCT Berhad (66538-K)
(formerly Known As WCT Engineering Berhad)

for being awarded with the prestigious
INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARD 2008

in the category of
EXPORT EXCELLENCE
FOR SERVICES IN THE
CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

CONGRATULATIONS

WCT ENGINEERING



International Circuit

International Achievement Award 2004

THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2008

BIZ NEWS

NEW STRAITS TIMES

INVEST MALAYSIA 2008 CONFERENCE

WCT wins wider scope of work in Abu Dhabi



LOH: The job value for the Abu Dhabi racecourse has gone up from RM1.3 billion to RM2.1 billion

WCT Engineering Bhd has won an extra RM800 million scope of work for its Formula 1 (F1) race-track project in Abu Dhabi, raising the total contract value to RM2.1 billion.

The project will now be completed in June 2009, six months later than scheduled, because of the additional work, executive director Loh Siew Choh told reporters after presenting WCT Engineering's investment prospects to investors at the Invest Malaysia 2008 conference in Kuala

Lumpur yesterday.

"The job value has gone up from RM1.3 billion to RM2.1 billion," Loh added. "Right now, we're ahead of schedule."

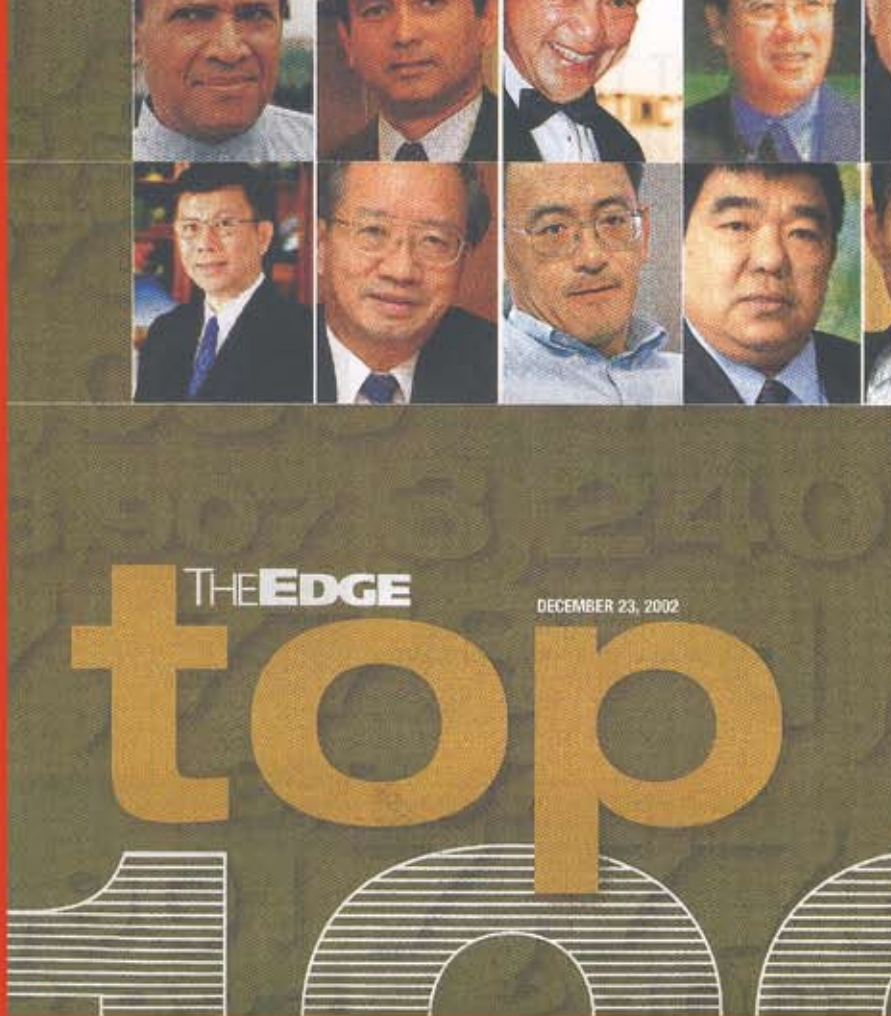
WCT, which had built F1 racing circuits in Malaysia and Bahrain, won the job to construct the Abu Dhabi racetrack in July 2007.

Formula 1 Holdings Inc chief executive officer Bernie Ecclestone had said that India is expected to host its inaugural F1 grand prix in 2009. Two days ago, in an interview

at the Sepang International Circuit, he said that Malaysia's Grand Prix organisers have agreed to host night racing in 2009.

"Singapore's lighting team had been in Sepang to consult with local officials about the viability of a night race," he said.

Asked if WCT would be interested to bid for the job to build an F1 track in India or a proposed upgrading of the Malaysian F1 track, Loh replied: "If the opportunity arises, we would like to participate."



PRESS-WORTHY: WCT consistently enjoys favourable press coverage. This has boosted its image in the public perception as an industry player of repute. More importantly it has been a factor in motivating the company to move forward with boldness and innovation.



M I L E S T O N E S

1981 • 2011 **30** YEARS
Three decades of INNOVATIVE BUILDING





M I L E S T O N E S

- 1981
 - Company was founded as WCT Earthworks and Building Contractors Sdn Bhd by Wong Chew Lai, Wong Sewe Weng, Chan Soon Huat and Taing Kim Hwa
 - Acquired 1st construction machine to tender for earthwork related projects
 - Secured 1st project for earthworks in Jalan Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur
- 1993
 - Successfully completed 1st major infrastructure project as Main Contractor – Selangor Turf Club, Sungai Besi, Malaysia
- 1995
 - Listed and quoted on the Second Board of Bursa Malaysia Securities Berhad as WCT Engineering Berhad – 1st Sub-contractor in Malaysia to be listed and quoted on Bursa
 - Founders Chan Soon Huat and Wong Chew Lai retire from the Board of Directors of the Company
- 1996
 - Successfully completed bulk earthworks of the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) project (more than 50 million cubic metres of earth was excavated)
- 1997
 - First property sales launch at the integrated township of Bandar Bukit Tinggi, Klang, Malaysia



Top: LISTING OF WCT ON THE SECOND BOARD OF THE KUALA LUMPUR STOCK EXCHANGE.

Bottom: A 45-TON EXCAVATOR AND A 75-TONNER, PARKED SIDE BY SIDE, CIRCA 1990: This is one picture from the invaluable early history photo collection of WCT submitted by Mr Phang Hock Loon, a pioneer of the company.



M I L E S T O N E S c o n t d

- 1998 • Successfully completed the Sepang F1 Circuit - contract value of RM308 million, within a record time of 14 months
- 1999 • Transferred to the Main Board of Bursa Malaysia Securities Berhad – Construction Sector
- First foray into overseas construction on a Government-to-Government initiative to undertake 3 highway projects in India on a Build, Operate & Transfer basis
- 2001 • Achieved ISO 9002 : 1994 Quality Management System Certification
- 2002 • Malaysia Construction Industry Excellent Award – Builder of the Year Award
- Achieved accumulated property sales of RM1.0 billion
- 2003 • Achieved ISO 9001: 2000 Quality Management System Certification





Top pic: 1999
SNAPSHOT OF WCT'S
DONATION TO THE
NATIONAL KIDNEY
FOUNDATION, IN
CONJUNCTION WITH
THE TRANSFER OF WCT
BERHAD TO THE MAIN
BOARD OF BURSA
MALAYSIA.



Bottom pic: 2004
OPENING BELL AT
THE LISTING AND
QUOTATION OF WCT
LAND BERHAD ON
BURSA MALAYSIA'S
PROPERTY SECTOR:
Performing the honours
is Dato' Chua Soon Poh.

M I L E S T O N E S

c o n t d

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2004 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Successfully completed first overseas project - Tada-Nellore Highway, Andhra Pradesh, India• Successfully completed first Middle East project - Bahrain International Circuit - contract value of RM586 million within a record time of 16 months• Malaysia Construction Industry Excellent Awards - International Achievement Award |
| 2005 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industry Excellence Award - Export Excellence Award 2004 - Construction Services Sector• Achieved accumulated property sales of RM2.0 billion• Achieved OHSAS 18001: 1999 Occupational Health and Safety Management System Certification |
| 2006 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ventured into property investment and management by launching the Bandar Bukit Tinggi Mall, Klang, Malaysia, with gross area of 2.1 million sq. ft.• Annual Group Turnover breached RM1.0 billion mark |
| 2007 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foray into Abu Dhabi construction market - Yas Marina F1 Circuit in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.• Inducted as a component stock of the Kuala Lumpur Composite Index (KLCI) by Bursa Malaysia Securities Berhad (now FBM100)• Market Capitalisation breached RM1.0 billion mark |



Top pic: 2005 INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR EXPORT EXCELLENCE – CONSTRUCTION SERVICES, GIVEN OUT BY THE MINISTRY OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE & INDUSTRY (MITI).

Bottom pic:
DATO' CAPT. SUFIAN WITH THE 'CONTRACTOR OF THE YEAR' AWARD, 2010.



M I L E S T O N E S

c o n t d

- 2008
 - Industry Excellence Award - Export Excellence Award 2008 - Construction Services Sector
 - Awarded the Brand Laureate Award for Best Brands - Engineering & Construction (2007/2008)
 - Foray into Vietnam property market with the award of an Investment Certificate by the Government of Vietnam for the mix-commercial development project, Platinum Plaza, in Ho Chi Minh City
 - Achieved OHSAS 18001: 2007 Operational Health and Safety Certification
 - Shareholders' Funds breached RM1.0 billion mark
- 2009
 - Admitted as an International Corporate Ordinary Member of International Real Estate Federation (FIABCI) Malaysian Chapter
 - Successfully completed the most modern F1 Circuit in the world, Yas Marina Circuit, Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. within record time of 28 months
 - Formed strategic partnership with Employees Provident Fund (EPF), pension fund of Malaysia, to undertake a mix-commercial development *The Paradigm* in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia
 - Formed strategic partnership with Iskandar Investment Berhad, a subsidiary of Khazanah Nasional Berhad, investment arm of the Government of Malaysia, to undertake a high-rise residential development in Medini, Iskandar Malaysia
 - Record Group Turnover registered at RM4.7 billion

- 2010
 - Achieved OHSAS 14001: 2004 Environmental Management System Certification
 - Admission to The Edge Billion Ringgit Club in Malaysia
 - Founder Wong Sewe Wing retires from the Board of Directors and serves as an Advisor to the Company
 - Malaysia Construction Industry Excellence Awards – ‘Contractor of the Year’ and ‘International Achievement’ awards 2010
- 2011
 - 30th Anniversary

MD TAING KIM HWA
OFFICIATES THE
11 OCTOBER 2010
SOFT LAUNCH OF
PREMIÈRE HOTEL IN
BANDAR BUKIT TINGGI,
KLANG



PART 1

STEPPING OUT



THE WCT STORY... **THE BIRTH AND EARLY YEARS OF WCT** _FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS COULD COME GREAT THINGS. THIS APTLY ENCAPSULATES WCT'S JOURNEY OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS – A STRUGGLING EARTHWORKS COMPANY WITH JUST ONE WHEEL LOADER BECOMES A WELL MANAGED BILLION-RINGGIT CORPORATION LISTED ON BURSA MALAYSIA.



THE COMPANY'S FIRST MACHINE, THE CATERPILLAR (CAT) 950. Bought second hand at the princely sum of RM175,000, the wheel loader is still in operation.

Previous page:

WCT'S EARLY-DAY 75-TON EXCAVATOR.

Picture courtesy: Phang Hock Loon

When the idea to form WCT took root in 1980, its four founders did not have big ambitions. They could afford only a small capital outlay, and the thinking at that time was to take things one step at a time.

The timing to start WCT couldn't have been worse. The world economy was in recession, and although Malaysia wasn't, it was teetering on the brink; it was a matter of when. The tipping point came in 1985.

So, the founders did not have big dreams; they wanted to start a small company specialising in earthworks.

And when it came to naming the company, it seemed simple yet appropriate to use the first letter of the founders' surnames – W for the Wong brothers Chew Lai and Sewe Wing, C for Chan Soon Huat and T for Peter Taing Kim Hwa.

Why earthworks? According to Taing, the barrier to entry was high because of the need for heavy equipment, hence the fledgling company felt that earthworks as entry point lessened restrictions. Taing himself was fascinated by the big machinery used in the construction industry, while the other three partners had some experience in earthworks and construction.

(continued on page 41)







Pioneer staff Phang Hock Loon shares his album collection, with notations, of WCT's early history.

Opposite page, top: SITE VISIT, TAMAN KOSAS, AMPANG, EARLY 1990. FROM LEFT, CHAN KIM BENG, PHANG HOCK LOON, PETER TAING AND MOK KWAI LOY.

Opposite page, bottom left: 45-TON AND 75-TON EXCAVATORS.

Opposite page, bottom right: FROM MINI 2-TON BULL DOZER TO 50-TON BULL DOZER.

This page anti-clockwise from left: SITE VISIT TO TAMAN KOSAS, AMPANG, EARLY 1990, WITH CATERPILLAR REP. FROM THE US.

CHECKING OUT MORE THAN 20 UNITS OF HEAVY EQUIPMENT FROM COLOMBO WITH A VIEW TO PURCHASE, SRI LANKA, EARLY 1990.

INVITE TO NEW MACHINES LAUNCH BY TRACTORS MALAYSIA, EARLY 1990.

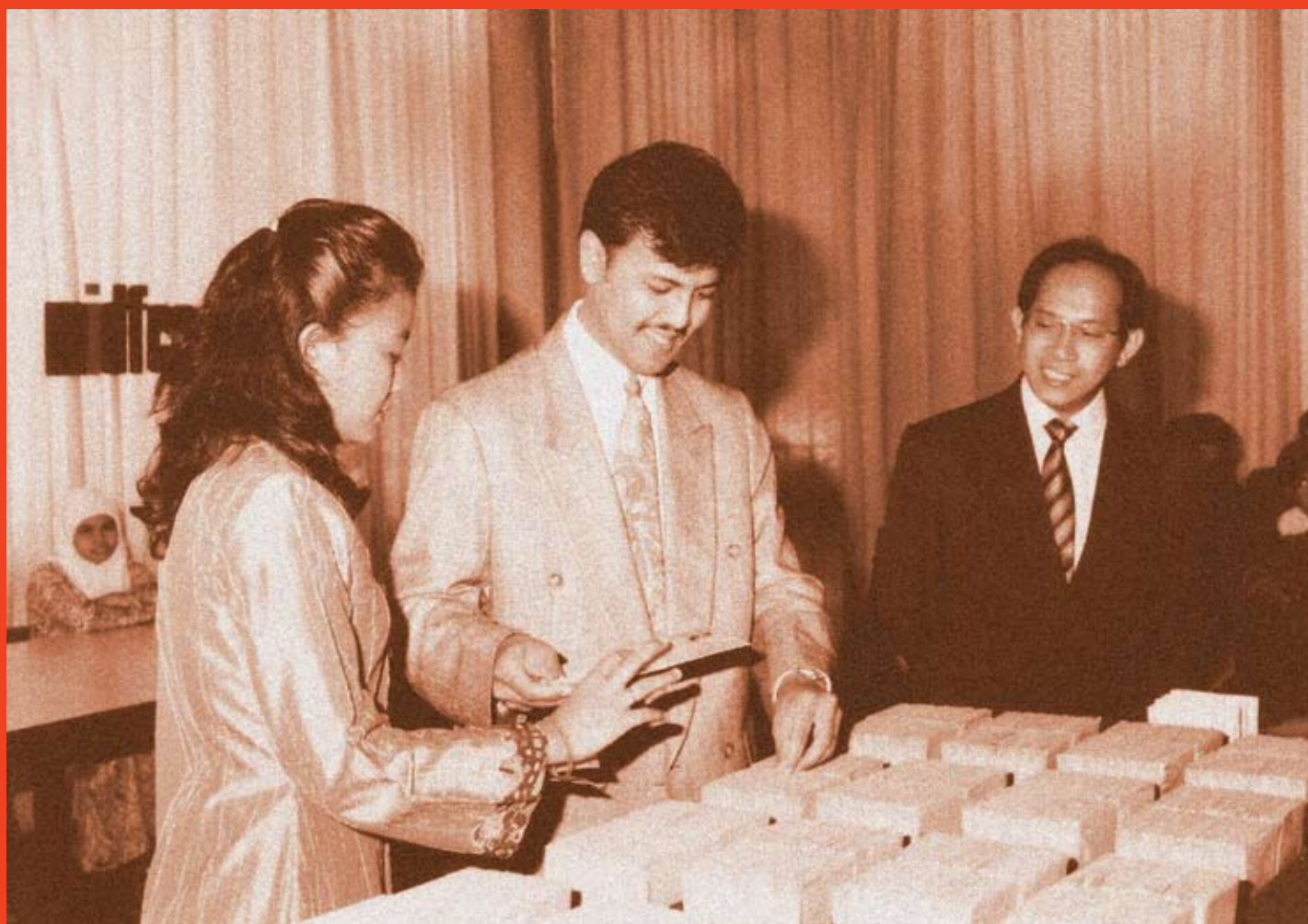
FROM 4-INCH FRY TO WHOPPING 29-INCH GOLDEN AROWANA AFTER 24 YEARS IN THE HQ AQUARIUM.







SELANGOR TURF CLUB, OCTOBER 2010. In 1993, WCT landed the infrastructural project for the Selangor Turf Club and took the leap into civil engineering and infrastructure. From there the company climbed upwards to become one of the most efficient contractors of the sector. The project was a big break for the struggling WCT.



(continued on from page 34)

In 1981, WCT Earthworks and Building Contractors was set up as a partnership. It began with only one asset. The founders managed to put together enough funds for the down payment of a wheel loader – a used Caterpillar (CAT) 950 that cost RM175,000 – a princely sum at the time. Today, the wheel loader is still in operation, and serving its owners well.

WCT's first office was in Overseas Union Garden along Old Klang Road, Kuala Lumpur.

It had a staff of six – the four founders together with Mok Kwai Loy, an excellent dragline operator who was brought in to operate the wheel loaders and Phang Hock Loon to oversee maintenance and procurement of machines and spare parts. Both Mok and Phang had grown up in Puchong, where the Wongs, Chan and Taing also resided.

January 14, 1981 was a milestone for the company. It took over the assets, comprising six wheel loaders, from Wong Earthworks, a company owned by the Wong brothers. The company was renamed WCT Earthworks and Building Contractors Sdn Bhd.

Taing was made chief executive overseeing business development, finance and strategies because among the four, he had the most education, having graduated with a degree in economics from Sunderland Polytechnic, UK. Wong Sewe Wing was put in charge of site operations because of his experience in earthworks.

From the start both Chan Soon Huat and Wong Chew Lai were not directly involved with the day-to-day running of the company but played advisory roles as they had their own businesses to manage.

The early years were very difficult ones for WCT and severely tested the mettle of its top management.

In the beginning, the company was involved in dry stripping operations for tin-mining companies, and payment was on a month-to-month basis. The first project was in Jalan Ipoh in Kuala Lumpur, and when that was done, operations moved to Ayer Hitam in Puchong, working for the same tin-mining company, Syarikat Trimal Sdn Bhd.

Dry stripping refers to using heavy equipment like wheel loaders, hydraulic excavators and draglines to remove the overburden (top layer of

Opposite page: OFFICIATING THE 1995
OFFER FOR SALE BALLOTING ARE PETER
TAING (top pic) AND DATO' AZMIL
KHALILI BIN DATO' KHALID, FIRST
CHAIRMAN OF WCT BERHAD
(bottom pic).

But even in the darkest hours, the founders did not give up hope. For the long term, a conscious decision was made to move away from working for the tin-mines to the construction industry.

earth) of a tin-mine, so that the miners could extract the alluvial deposits of tin found underneath, a level which is not reachable by conventional dredging methods.

In the early 1980s, world demand for tin took a dive because of the recession. Tin-mining was a sunset industry with many mines closing. “Initially we worked at a loss but persisted as we could not afford to be idle. We needed the jobs. WCT was a minion then, it was held to ransom by the big companies,” Chan remembers.

During the most critical years, between 1986 and 1990, there were many moments of despair. Salaries for directors and payments to creditors and suppliers were deferred by three to seven months as the company faced cash flow constraints.

But even in the darkest hours, the founders did not give up hope. For the long-term, a conscious decision was made to move away from working for the tin-mines to the construction industry.

Towards this end the company contracted earthworks jobs from private property developers, the first of which was residential property development in Taman Mayang, Petaling Jaya and later, a technical college in Bangi, 30-km south of Kuala Lumpur.

Moving out of dry stripping operations for the tin-mining industry proved to be a major stride in the history of WCT.

“It was a turning point ... in the late 1980s, we did some jobs for private developers and from there, we moved on to civil engineering and infrastructural work. The big break came in 1992, when WCT landed the Selangor Turf Club (STC) infrastructure project. Today the STC is the main horse racecourse in Malaysia.

“For many years, we remained a subcontractor by choice, because every main contractor, who was also among the big players, was a friendly party, and not a competitor. So we could land more projects as a subcontractor than as a main contractor,” says Taing. In this way, WCT managed to carve a niche for itself as one of the most efficient subcontractors in the construction sector.

Another turning point for WCT came in 1995, when it was listed as WCT Engineering Berhad on the Second Board of Bursa Malaysia, then known as the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange. In June 2008, it underwent another name change to WCT Berhad, to reflect its broad spectrum of activities that span engineering & construction, property development, and assets investments and management.

In all these moves, the team was consistently driven by the determination to succeed, very often putting in more than 10-hour stretches daily seven days a week. “Every day for five years since the company’s inception, we worked till very late, and there were months when the founders did not take home a salary. But we did not see it as suffering because we were fired up by the desire to be successful”, says Taing. He pays tribute to the pioneer staff, who helped build WCT from the beginning. “The staff were very close to the founders; they were with us every day. All of them put their shoulders to the wheel, they were passionate about the work, and they were not calculating... they would work until very late daily, and even on Sundays, because they could see the fruits of their labour, and how the company was growing and acquiring more new machinery.

There was also a long period in the 1980s when most of our staff worked on project sites based outstation (Malaysia-Thailand border, Grik, Langkawi, Tapah, Gopeng, Kuantan, just naming a few) and in remote areas far away from their love ones. We were on survival mode – we had to find jobs outside of KL where there was less competition.”

Founded on the core principles of efficiency, determination, hard work, perseverance, thrift and integrity, the story of WCT is as fascinating as it is inspiring.

The company’s growth over the years is helped by the entrepreneurial spirit of key management, and the ability to see beyond the present. Of course, an appropriate dose of daring also went a long way to help top management make critical decisions. These together have contributed to WCT’s success •

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BY THE WAY

The economy No joy ride

WCT was set up at a time
when the global
economy was in the
throes of a prolonged
recession, its worst
since the Great Depression of
the 1930s.

Indeed, the early 1980s was one of the worst periods for the Malaysian economy, as it was not spared the effects of the global economic downturn.

The world economy, roiled by two oil shocks in the 1970s, was fragile and in a constant state of volatility. In the wake of the energy crisis, which caused a prolonged period of stagflation, many parts of the developed world fell into recession in 1979, and it wasn't until late 1983 that nascent signs of recovery emerged.

Growth in the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) group of developed countries contracted by 0.8% in 1982, from an expansion of 2.3% in 1981.

In the same period, unemployment rose to 8.1% from 5.7%.

In the US, fuelled by rising energy prices, inflation soared to 11.3% in 1979 and 13.5% in 1980, while

unemployment reached record high levels of about 10% in 1982 and 1983.

Malaysia caught the full brunt of the economic maelstrom, mainly because it was an open economy and very dependent on commodity exports for growth. The global recession hurt demand for exports and depressed commodity prices.

Coupled with emerging structural constraints, economic growth slowed. In the early 1980s, the government implemented counter-cyclical fiscal measures to pump-prime the economy, but to no avail.

Instead, it only succeeded in causing the government's foreign debts to balloon from US\$4 billion to US\$15 billion by 1984.

By 1985, growth had stagnated, and in 1986, the domestic economy experienced a full blown recession with its gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 1%. During the 1985-86 period, unemployment rose to a record level of 8%.

The crisis, however, was a blessing in disguise.

It exposed the major structural weaknesses of the Malaysian economy, one of which was that it depended too much on commodity exports. A radical shift in economic policies was urgently needed to address these weaknesses.

It was during this recession that Malaysia realized the need to step up the pace of the manufacturing sector. The first Industrial Master

Plan (IMP) was launched in 1985, which essentially identified a two-pronged approach – resource and non-resource-based industrialization.

In 1986, the Promotion of Investment Act was put in place to attract a greater inflow of foreign investments. An incentive was that 100% foreign ownership was allowed provided 50% of the output was exported and that it did not compete with the local industries.

From the late 1980s to the 1990s, Malaysia was successful in drawing in a large inflow of FDIs; in fact, it was the largest recipient of FDIs in Asean during this period.

It was in the 1980s that Malaysia ventured into heavy industries – steel in 1982 with the

establishment of Perwaja Steel and cars in 1986, with the setting up of Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional, the national car maker. By 1990, some 30% of Malaysia's GDP was from manufactured goods, compared with 18% in 1970. It had successfully transformed to become a newly industrialised country (NIC). It also became one of the 50 largest exporters in the world.

In 1990, the New Economic Policy, which was introduced in 1970 to bring about more equitable growth, was replaced by the National Development Policy (NDP). The NDP was part of a larger development plan, Vision 2020, which would propel Malaysia towards fully-developed status by the

year 2020. Great emphasis was placed on moving up the technology and value-added ladder.

This required that the Malaysian economy grow by an average of 7% for the next 30 years, and for per capita income to rise four-fold.

From 1990, Malaysia's economy saw a boom, growing at double-digit rate in the early 1990s, spurred by huge infrastructure spending. The stock market saw a huge rally, peaking in 1993, and the resultant wealth effect put a lot of

cash into the consumer's pocket.

However, the party ended in 1997 – the excesses have come home to roost. Companies were highly leveraged, the economy was overheating and the currency was said to have run ahead of fundamentals. Speculators took advantage of this, bashing down Asian currencies. The first to succumb was the Thai baht on July 2, 1997. The rest followed and Asia went through a recession of unprecedented magnitude.

Malaysia's GDP, for example, contracted 8% in 1998, as did most of Asia's economies.

However, Malaysia recovered very quickly, after imposing draconian measures that included capital controls and pegging the exchange rate and at the same implementing pro-growth policies such as keeping interest rates low.

In 1999, the economy turned around to grow at 8% in 1999, slowed to 1% in 2000 but stabilized at around 4-5% in the last

Below:

PROTON, TANJONG MALIM.

Opposite page: NEWLY-MINTED CARS ROLL OUT OF THE PROTON CITY FACILITY IN TANJONG MALIM, 2010.

In 1986 Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional, the national car maker manufactured its first vehicles and helped launch Malaysia into the ranks of a newly industrialised country (NIC).



few years.

By the mid 2000s, it was clear that the Malaysian economy was once again at crossroads - a middle-income economy facing the challenges to move to high-income status.

But the transition was taking too long. As the forces of globalization sweep across the world economy, the need for change became even more urgent. Malaysia was losing its competitive edge as investment destination to other emerging economies, notably Indonesia, China, Vietnam and India.

And this urgency was magnified by the global financial crisis that hit in 2008, which led to yet another global recession in 2009. The Malaysian

economy wasn't spared - growth contracted by 1.7%, but projected to recover to grow at 7% in 2010.

In March 2010 Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak launched the New Economic Model (NEM), a blueprint that will drive the country's endeavours to become a high-income nation by 2020.

The NEM, which stresses innovation, technology and moving up the value add chain, is supported by three main pillars - the government transformation programme (GTP), the economic transformation programme (ETP) and the 10th Malaysia Plan.

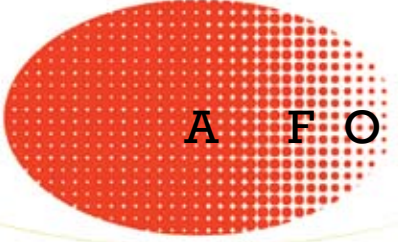
At the point of writing this article, the government has launched the roadmap for the

ETP, which involves the rollout of 131 entry point projects in 12 national key economic areas.

Total investments that are needed over the next 10 years are estimated at RM1.4 trillion.

On Oct 26, to kickstart the ETP, the government announced the time schedule for the implementation of nine projects worth RM30 billion •





A FOUNDER'S VIEW

PETER TAING KIM HWA

TAING STRESSES THAT
ALTHOUGH
HE STEERS
THE SHIP, THE
SUCCESS ACHIEVED
BY WCT TODAY IS NOT A
'ONE-MAN SHOW'. IT IS
A COMBINED
EFFORT OF EVERYONE
IN THE COMPANY...



“BITE LIKE A DOG, DON’T LET GO” IS A GEM OF A PHRASE THAT STAFF AT WCT WHO WORK CLOSELY WITH ITS CO-FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, PETER TAING, ARE FAMILIAR WITH.

Over the years, it has become a mantra of sorts among key management personnel in the company.

Notable is the fact that Taing and his co-founders have successfully ingrained this culture of dogged determination, perseverance and hard work among the company’s rank and file. Today these very tenets, together with teamwork and the ability to stay focused, form the bedrock on which WCT’s many achievements and successes have been built.

Perhaps, the fact that Taing himself is no stranger to adversity and hardship helped lay these important cornerstones. He grew up in a tough environment, where home was a pig and vegetable farm in Puchong, a backwater of a place back in the 1950s and 60s.

From an early age, he understood the virtues of hard work and thrift and that nothing comes easy. For him though, while there is no short cut to success he has nevertheless found his pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. This, after travelling a long and arduous

journey through sheer grit and determination, and perhaps, a small dose of luck.

Poor though the family was, his parents struggled to send him to the United Kingdom for his tertiary education, where he learnt that failure wasn’t an option.

Taing graduated with a degree in economics from the Sunderland Polytechnic (now Sunderland University) in 1979, but not in the best of times. The world economy was on the brink of a recession, and Malaysia, a small and open economy, was also impacted by the downturn. Jobs were scarce and competition was keen.

Every dark cloud, however, has a silver lining. During this time, while he was still looking for a job, he was approached by his friends to form a construction company. After several discussions in a neighbourhood *kopitiam* along Eighth Mile, Puchong Road, WCT was conceived, and incorporated in 1981.

It was a bold decision, because Taing, and he says this himself, had no intimate knowledge of the construction industry. He was, after all, a farm boy.

However he was put in the driving seat from the day the company was set up.

He was the natural and unanimous choice of the

Page 48: PETER AT HOME JUST BEFORE LEAVING FOR THE OFFICE.

An unassuming man never given to pomposity or airs, Peter is dressed for the photoshoot exactly as he is for the normal work day. The session was over in 5 minutes.

Following page: A SMILEY PETER. A photographer's scoop perhaps? An executive from the office quips that it's difficult catching Peter in a 'smiley' pose.

other three founders – the two Wong brothers and Chan Soon Huat, simply because among the four, he had the most education.

“My three partners looked at me, and said, ‘you can do it’, and that was how I was put in the position of CEO. At that time, I myself did not know if I could do the job. I had not done it before, but since my partners said I could, I said ‘ok, I do’. The only thing going for me was that even in those days, I had been fascinated with machinery like the excavators and tractors used for earthworks. As a child, I made my own dragline (excavator) using a *Milo* tin.”

This fascination with draglines and cranes provided Taing with an insight into the capabilities and potential that could be derived from such machinery, especially in terms of output. Even at an early age, he understood the benefits of automation, innovation and moving up the value chain.

He believed and still does, that the chances of success are higher if there is passion for one's work, and taking it further, if it is treated like a hobby. “What made us return to the office every evening and work until midnight during the early years? Or why visit the work sites during the weekends? It's because we liked watching the projects take shape, and knowing that we could do the job well.”

Indeed one of the things that Taing is very passionate about is completing a job and delivering it successfully.

“Anything that is constructable is doable. When we take on a project, we must think that we will finish it whatever it takes, even if at a loss. We must persist, because if we do not complete the work, it is embarrassing. If we make a loss, we let it be, we learn from the experience, and try to make money from the next job. But, the approach must be right – we never say we cannot do it”.

Along the way, after many hard knocks and learning on the job, Taing developed entrepreneurial strength and a knack for seeing beyond the short term - what we now call vision and foresight.

Supported by an able management team, he boldly moved on to try new endeavours. This though, wasn't done without planning. Taing understands only too well that in any business, there are risks, as he often tells his staff, 'failing to plan is planning to fail'.

It is important, Taing says, to set a time frame when taking on new ventures. "You must know when to cut loss." In this regard, he has what he terms 'five-year plans' for new ventures, whereby for the first five years, even if the going is tough but there are prospects, he will give himself another five years to pitch for success. "Now, if we fail to turn things around during this stage, then it is time to close shop."



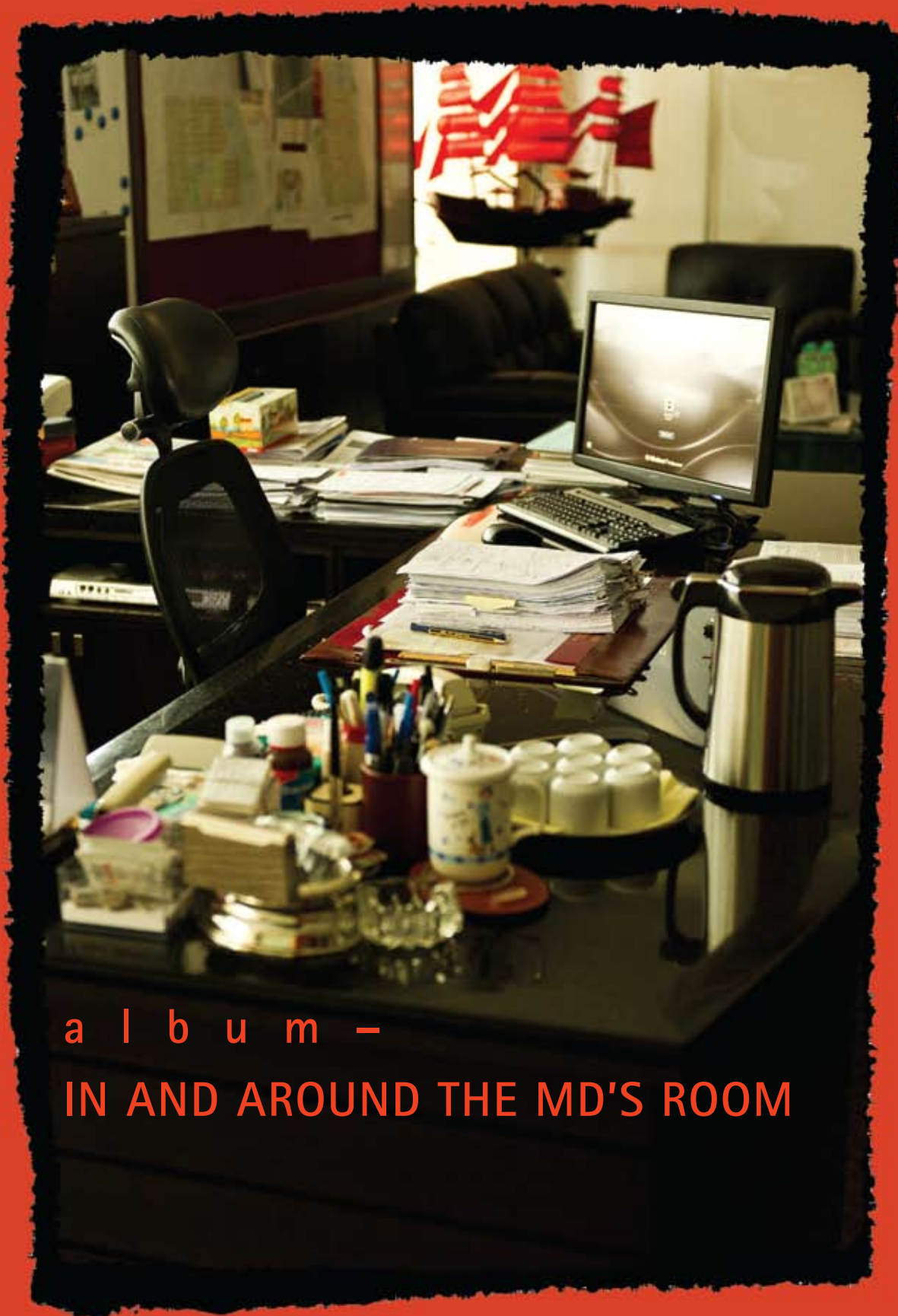
Following this principle, WCT was able to slowly but steadily, move away from doing just earthworks in the 1980s to infrastructure and building construction, and in the 1990s, property development. In the 2000s, largely out of necessity, it ventured abroad, and in the process, managed to carve a niche for itself in the Middle East, building some of the most iconic projects in the region, namely the F1 circuits in Bahrain and Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Taing stresses that although he steers the ship, the success achieved by WCT today is not a 'one-man show'. It is a combined effort of everyone in the company, hence of importance that each employee fulfill his or her role.

His favourite analogy is the ship, where its ability to sail is not dependent on the captain alone, but on the whole crew. "So, if one of the sailors sees someone not doing his part, which is equivalent to drilling a hole on the shipbed causing the ship to sink, he must stop the culprit, because if the ship sinks, he, along with the rest, will also drown.

"And so, it is with a company. Everyone working here is a stakeholder. If the company fails, everyone will lose his or her job. It is to no one's benefit when that happens."

And so, for 30 years, through storm and typhoon, Taing has guided WCT, a **small boat** in the beginning but now, a **seaworthy ship** that has come into its own •



a l b u m -
IN AND AROUND THE MD'S ROOM

“The **San Felipe** – launched in 1690 in the port of La Coruna, was one of the most beautiful Spanish warships of the XVIIth century, richly adorned with beautiful wood carvings and of graceful design. She established herself very quickly as her impressive record in the first four years of service made her flagship of the famous Spanish Armada. Under the command of Commodore Enrique Macdonnell, San Felipe was armed with at least 96 cannons to take on the mightiest ships in the French and British navies. Her slim profile and wide spread of sail bestowed **great maneuverability and agility**. San Felipe’s role in the wars against the British and French was to help protect Spanish settlements and harbours, to transport treasures and to **safeguard** the long and hazardous **passage** of cargo ships back to Spanish ports.”

Opposite page: PETER TAING'S WORK STATION. A desk crammed with work memorabilia, and some utensils for the day's sustenance – Peter's space is a no-nonsense sanctuary devoid of fanfare or the pricey artefacts befitting the man who occupies the top chair in the company.

Below: CEILING-HIGH REPLICATE OF THE 'SAN FELIPE', FLAGSHIP OF THE SPANISH ARMADA. Peter likens the company he heads to the ship he admires. He views his organisation as a sea captain his boat, and believes that the ablest helmsman cannot keep his craft afloat unless the crew pull their weight and play their part.



Below and right top and centre:
FIGURINE MACHINES SHELVED BEHIND
GLASS SCREENS. Peter admits to a
fascination for heavy machinery from
young, perhaps an early announcement
of a later profession.

Below: A GOLDEN AROWANA GLIDES IN
SLOW MOTION INSIDE ITS AQUARIUM
OUTSIDE THE CEO'S ROOM. Tough men
show their soft spot occasionally. This
fish and a similar one in the lobby on
the ground floor have been popularly
adopted as company mascots.

Opposite page, top: COPPER TOOLING
ARTWORK, GIFT FROM LONG-TIME
ASSOCIATE TRACTORS MALAYSIA. The
message strikes a resonant chord with
Peter.

Opposite page, bottom: EARLY-DAY
COMPANY SIGNAGE. Boxed away in the
CEO's ante-room, but not forgotten. The
wooden signboard in blackwood and
gold provides a link to cherished history.





BY THE WAY

The dawn of the construction industry



The early years of Malaysia's construction industry can be traced back to the late 1950s. After obtaining independence from British rule in 1957, economic and social development was the twin priorities of the new government. It recognized that to achieve both, it needed to put in place the right and proper infrastructure, which would act as the building blocks of its development drive.

This meant putting in place basic
amenities such as roads, railways, airports, ports,
schools, hospitals, government offices, power
and telecommunications.

The construction industry was important also because of its multiplier impact on the rest of the economy – it feeds the growth of other sectors, such as manufacturing and services.

Not surprisingly, because of its strong spin-off effects on the rest of the economy, the construction industry has been and still is a main target of fiscal pump-priming spending during periods of economic slowdown and recessions.

In all the five-year economic development blueprints (Malaysian Plans) that followed, a significant portion of the government's development expenditure was channeled to infrastructure construction.

The construction sector thus became one of the key contributors to Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP – sum of goods and services produced by a country).

However, the boom years came only in the 1990s, after the government launched Vision 2020, an ambitious plan to take Malaysia to fully-developed status by 2020.

It was during this period that the Malaysian economy grew the fastest at double-digit levels, accompanied by a strong rally on Malaysia's stock market, which peaked in 1993. This rapid growth spurred a rising demand for facilities, and created infrastructural constraints.

To address this shortage, the government, during the second half of the 6th Malaysia Plan (1994-1995), increased the allocation for infrastructural development to RM18.6 billion, from RM8.6 billion in the first half.

It was a period that saw the rollout of a series of mega projects that included the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang, which would help propel Malaysia into the digital age and transform it into a hub for high technology industries.

Reflecting this economic vibrancy, the growth of the construction sector hit a high in 1995, expanding at 17.3%. Between 1994 and 1997,

Opposite: BULK EARTHWORKS AT KUALA LUMPUR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (KLIA).

The 1990s saw the rollout of a series of government-initiated mega projects that included the KLIA in Sepang. It was during this period that WCT landed one of its early major projects in bulk earthworks as a sub contractor, completing the excavation of more than 50 million cubic metres of earth in 1996.

Following pages: SEPANG F1 CIRCUIT. Following the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis the construction industry entered a period of doldrums but has recently recovered somewhat.





the sector expanded by around 14%, a growth rate that had not been experienced since.

Still, following nature's law, what goes up, must come down. The construction sector entered a period of doldrums after the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis, which essentially saw a series of speculative attacks on Asian currencies. Speculators saw that the region's buoyant growth was unsustainable, and bet that their currencies would reflect this over time. Central banks spent billions defending their currencies from these attacks but to no avail. Finally, on July 2, 1997, Thailand devalued the baht, triggering the crisis.

The crisis hit Malaysia hard – primarily because the economy was overheating at the time, and banks were over-exposed to the corporate sector. The country was also registering widening current account deficits, and businesses were too exposed to foreign currency debts. At one stage, the ringgit plunged below the RM5.00 mark against the US dollar while the stock market sank to an all time low of 261 points.

The government put in place a series of measures to stem the slide, including capital controls and fixing the exchange rate at RM3.80 to the US dollar - what was then viewed as a draconian measure.

Even then, the domestic economy contracted by about 8% in 1998.

Thus, from 1998 to around 2005, the construction sector hardly grew at an average of 0.5% per annum.

It was around this time that the Construction Industry Master Plan (2006-2015) was launched. The CIMP comprised several strategic initiatives that would propel local construction companies to be globally competitive by 2015, first by strengthening their domestic capacity.

The construction industry has recovered some ground in recent years, growing at an average of around 3% from 2005 to 2010 •

A F O U N D E R ' S V I E W

W O N G S E W E W I N G



TO WONG SEWE WING, HIS JOB IS ALSO HIS HOBBY. AND BECAUSE THIS IS SO, HE IS NOT ONLY COMMITTED, BUT PASSIONATE ABOUT WHAT HE DOES.

Wong, a co-founder of WCT, enjoys his job – he is in charge of construction site management and operations. And when there is enjoyment, time flies. Yes, even when he has to work on the construction sites under the

punishing heat of the sun, and sometimes, in wind and rain.

“I am at the site every day ... the time passes very fast. It’s like a hobby. I go to the site, talk to my people ... and we work as a team,” says Wong. Certainly it must be this passion for, and the commitment to his job that enabled Wong to gain indepth knowledge of the execution and planning of all the company’s major earthworks projects. Over the years, he has earned himself the

reputation of “Earthworks King” among the construction fraternity.

Wong is still very much a hands-on manager, even though he is “semi-retired” at the age of 63. He stepped down as executive director in 2010, and has taken the role of advisor in the company.

There are numerous stories from colleagues about how, whenever there was a problem on the worksite, Wong would squat, chain smoke, look at the soil as he

WONG SEWE WING DROPS IN ON MD PETER TAING DURING A RECENT VISIT TO HQ. A case of mutual respect and trust.



pondered, and for sure, would come up with a solution. Sometimes, it took hours. When he was done the size of the cigarette butt heaps would just about indicate the severity of the problem!

Wong has played an instrumental role in the growth of WCT over the years, which started life in the earthworks business.

He was put in charge of site management and operations because earthworks was his forte. Wong

had been involved in earthworks for about four years in the 1970s before forming the partnership with the three other founders – his elder brother Wong Chew Lai, Chan Soon Huat and Peter Taing Kim Hwa.

At that time, his job was mainly to remove the overburden (top layer of soil) in a tin mine in Sungei Way in Selangor, so that the miners could get to the alluvial deposits of tin.

While his brother, Chan and

Taing knew each other well, Wong did not. “At that time, my brother, Chan, and Peter were good friends, but I didn’t know them very well ... most of the time I was at the worksite, so I did not socialise much with them.”

“When we got together to set up WCT, I laid down only one main condition – we had to be fair to each other in all our dealings. The partners agreed, and here we are today, still partners ... I have no



regrets at all taking the path I did. We have remained steadfast in our relationship because it is based on mutual respect and trust.”

For a man who comes from very humble background, Wong has come a long way since the 1970s. He was only 29 when WCT was established.

Together with the co-founders, they have been through the worst and best of times. The going was tough in the beginning. There were stretches when he had to work seven days a week and for more than 10 hours daily to meet delivery deadlines.

And because of the tough times during which profit margins were thin, Wong learnt early on about the importance of cost efficiency. “On the worksites, one of the first things that we do is make sure there is no wastage of materials and resources.”

For Wong, there is no such thing as a job that cannot be done. “Once we have signed on a job, there is no such thing as we cannot do it ... we must have the confidence

that we can do it.”

Wong’s contribution to the company has been described as invaluable by managing director and co-founder Taing. “I have never met anyone more hardworking than Wong; he is a man of few words, and just does what needs to be done.”

In fact, Taing says that when WCT landed the Sepang FI project, Wong had played an instrumental role in its completion. There was 800 acres of earthworks to be done, and it had to be completed within a year. “But with Wong’s experience, and WCT’s track record in earthworks, we did it,” he says.

Like his co-founders, Wong is a great believer in integrity, commitment and loyalty, which he says are the main ingredients of success. “If you are given a responsibility, and you are paid to do a job, then you must do it.”

Wong has done it, and today, he stands proud and tall as he looks back, and reflects on the company’s achievement •

W O N G C H E W L A I

OF THE FOUR FOUNDERS OF WCT BERHAD, WONG CHEW LAI, MORE POPULARLY KNOWN AS WONG CHEW TO HIS FRIENDS, HAD MORE EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY THAN THE OTHERS, SPECIFICALLY IN EARTHWORKS.

Born in 1945, he is also the oldest among the four co-founders and is elder brother to Wong Sewe Wing. The Wong brothers jointly started Wong Earthworks in Puchong in 1976.

In fact, in 1980, it was the older Wong who mooted the idea of forming a company with his brother Sewe Wing and his friends, Chan Soon Huat and Peter Taing Kim Hwa.

In 1981, he decided to shut down his own company to help set up WCT Earthworks and Building Sdn Bhd, which provided him with the opportunity to expand and venture further into the construction industry. Among all four partners, Peter Taing Kim Hwa was the only one with a university education which all felt was necessary in growing the business.

However, Wong Chew reduced his stake in WCT in 1995, cashing out after the company was listed on Bursa Malaysia (then known as Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange).

Wong Chew, like Chan Soon Huat, is no longer a major shareholder in the company which today has become an industry leader, but

the **critical role** he played in
the birth of WCT in the early 1980s will
be etched in the annals of its history.






CHAN SOON HUAT

CHAN SOON HUAT KNOWS WHAT IT IS LIKE BEING POOR. HE STARTED WORKING AT THE YOUNG AGE OF NINE, IN A RESTAURANT SERVING FOOD. THEN, WHEN HE WAS 10, HE WORKED IN A COFFEE SHOP, SERVING DRINKS.

“Some of the customers would rap me on my head when the coffee did not taste good,” he remembers.

When he was 11, he wanted to learn electrical wiring, but all he was allowed to do was wield a 12-pound hammer, pounding walls so that the electricians could put the wiring in. “In the end, I learnt nothing about wiring, but all that hammering really honed my muscles,” he says, chuckling.

At the age of 12, he worked in a construction site as a general worker. This was the beginning of his involvement in the construction sector. Chan managed to make a good living as a mason, and by his early 30s, was leading a comfortable life.



‘WCT managed to **beat the odds**, which Chan opines is not due to luck, but **sheer hard work and tenacity.**’

Chan, though, was ambitious. So, when the opportunity came to form the WCT partnership in 1981, and in an area in which he has experience, he did not hesitate.

The fact that he was already friends with the other founders – the Wong brothers and Peter Taing – also influenced his decision to jump boldly into the new venture.

Chan says that WCT, in the early years, went through a period of great hardship but the partners did not give up even though there were many moments of despair. “The economy was very bad in the mid 1980s, and we struggled to survive one day at a time,” he says.

WCT managed to beat the odds, which Chan opines is not due to luck, but sheer hard work and tenacity.

His proudest moment was when WCT successfully listed itself on the Second Board of the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange, now Bursa Malaysia.

By then, Chan was 48 years old, and had been working for almost 40 years! When the opportunity to take life easier came in the form of the listing exercise, he decided to cash out, and step down from the board.

Today, although Chan is no longer a major shareholder in the company, his co-founders have not forgotten the important role he had played during the early years. He is still a familiar figure in the WCT, as Chan is firm friends with them •

BY THE WAY

S u n s e t
o v e r t h e t i n m i n e s



Opposite: LUXURY HOMES BATHED
IN EVENING SHADES, TAMAN TASIK
PRIMA, PUCHONG.

Present-day Selangor is dotted
with myriad 'lakes'. For real
estate players, this is the catchall
description for the tin mines of
yesteryear, now touting ambience
since the earth has long ceased
yielding the mineral.

Below: TIN DREDGE. Sentinel of an
industry that has seen livelier days.



Malaysia's tin mining
industry began in the
early 1800s. Malaya, as
this country was then
called, became the world's
largest exporter of tin in
1883, accounting for

some 55% of global output. It remained a leading producer until the early 1990s, but its share of world output showed a declining trend from the 1980s onwards.

Until then, tin was one of the two major contributors to Malaysia's economy. In 1979, it was the world's largest producer of tin, accounting for 31% of total global output.

The crunch for the industry came in the 1980s, when tin prices were depressed by a combination of factors, one of which was the sharp decline in demand following the global recession that began in 1979 in the developed world, and dragged on until 1982.

Apart from the increased use of cheaper tin substitutes, rising competition from lower-cost new producers like Brazil and China also eroded Malaysia's competitiveness.

But the death knell for the industry was sounded by the collapse of the International Tin Agreement (ITA) and the International Tin Council (ITC) in 1985. The role of the ITC was to implement the ITA, which was first signed in 1956 to support the price of tin through mechanisms such as production quotas and buffer stock operations. The ITC was financed by its members, comprising tin producing countries like Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.

However, when prices came under continuous pressure in the early 1980s, the ITC ran out of money and could not continue its support operations, mainly done on the London Metal Exchange (LME).

On October 24, 1985, the ITC collapsed, and sparked a major crisis in most of the tin producing countries, causing the LME tin market to be closed. According to news reports, in the freed market, the price of tin fell to 40% of its level prior to the ITC collapse.

Since then, Malaysia continued to be a major exporter of tin but the metal was no longer the biggest contributor to its economy. By the 1990s, many mines had been competed out of business •

P u c h o n g

A s l e e p i n g g i a n t a w a k e s



BY THE WAY

JALAN PUCHONG FRONTING THE IOI BOULEVARD, 2010. Lights ablaze, and the traffic crawls like elsewhere in Malaysia's major townships. Yet, 50 years ago, Puchong wasn't even considered urban. In fact, it featured many small villages that had sprung up as a result of the tin mines and plantations that defined old Puchong. Served by an only road which exited from the Federal Highway, street lights were unheard of then – when darkness fell, there were hardly any vehicles on the road.



CHILDREN IN KG SG RASAU, BATU
14 PUCHONG, PLAY COMMUNITY
FOOTBALL BACKDROPPED BY A RUBBER
SMALLHOLDING, 2010. This Orang Asli
village sandwiched between modern
'*Tamans*' is what little is left that is
reminiscent of yesteryear's Puchong.

The progress of Puchong mirrors
the growth of WCT the company.
Puchong where the WCT
founders grew up, first
as childhood friends, and later as business
partners, finds a parallel in



the one-machine company that grew to become one of the top construction companies in Malaysia.

The once sleepy hollow emerged out of the many tin mines and rubber estates that sprouted and flourished during the 1950s and 60s.

Today it is a bustling and modern suburban township straddling the two key cities of Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya, and is a far cry from what it was some 50 years ago.

Puchong to a large extent, is a microcosm of the Malaysian economy and its development over the years.

Since the 1950s, the Malaysian economy has taken off and transformed, facilitated by the economic development efforts that had been put in place since the country won political independence in 1957.

Economic growth since the 1970s has been fast and furious despite several periods of recession during the intervening years. Against the backdrop of such economic vibrancy, Puchong too boomed.

Today, the self-contained township of Puchong is almost bursting at its seams, thanks to the rapid development and urbanisation that are taking place.

At last count, Puchong has an estimated population of some 780,000 and almost 50 township and several industrial projects. At its heart is Bandar Puchong Jaya and Bandar Puteri.

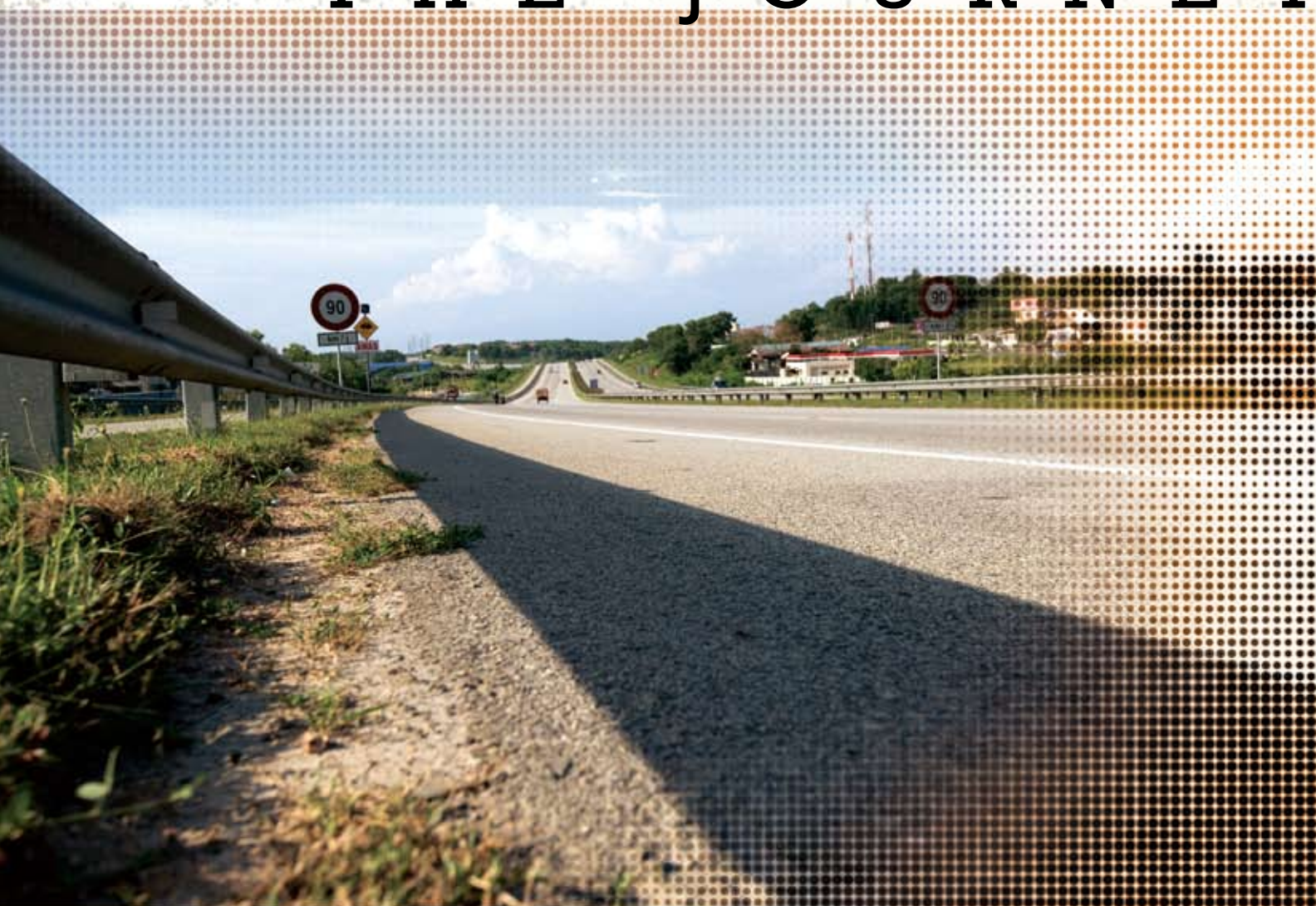
This suburban town is now served by a web of highways – the Shah Alam Expressway, the New Pantai Expressway, Lebuhraya Damansara Puchong and the Sungai Besi Highway.

Shopping and commercial complexes are mushrooming, and some of the country's largest banks, both local and foreign, have set up branches there.

By 2013, it will be connected to the surrounding cities and areas by its own light rail transit (LRT) system – that's when the extension of the existing Ampang Line is scheduled to be completed •

PART 2

THE JOURNEY



THE WCT STORY...

THE COMPANY COMES OF AGE

_IF THE 1980S WAS A DECADE OF FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL FOR WCT, IT WAS ALSO IN THIS PERIOD THAT ITS FOUNDERS AND THE PIONEERING TEAM LAID THE STRONG FOUNDATION THAT THE COMPANY IS BUILT ON.



Previous page:
GUTHRIE CORRIDOR EXPRESSWAY

Opposite page:
KL-KARAK HIGHWAY

From the 1990s, WCT not only grew from strength to strength, but along the way, it moved up the construction value chain – from a company that was involved in the most basic of earthworks to one that is today capable of building highways, airports, dams, F1 racing circuits and state-of-the-art buildings.

Phang Hock Loon, a pioneer staff, recalls that in the beginning, there was very little skills required in the work that WCT did. After all, removing the top layer of soil was more about machine than man!

“When we were doing dry stripping for tin mining companies, the job was very simple – using the excavator to remove the top layer earth. We stopped digging when the client told us to stop,” he recalls with a chuckle.

Truly necessity is the mother of invention. When the tin mining industry collapsed in the mid 1980s, and WCT’s survival was hanging by a thread, management made the bold decision to break out of this mould. It chose to diversify into infrastructural earthworks for quasi government agencies as a subcontractor.

The work was no longer so simple. Then as never before,

it was forced to acquire new skills, to
innovate, increase staff strength, and
upgrade its fleet of machinery.

But even when WCT got into infrastructural works, mostly as a subcontractor for the big companies, it was still a hand-to-mouth existence for some years. “We were small and the pricing was bad. So, despite working very hard, we still couldn’t make money,” recalls managing director Peter Taing.

The company however, could not afford to be idle as it needed the jobs to keep going. So it girded its loins and persisted. During this phase, it was involved mainly in the construction of roads, highways and townships as a subcontractor.

Staying as a subcontractor was a deliberate strategy to keep its job



Opposite page, left to right –

Top row:
IPOH-CHANGKAT HIGHWAY;
EAST-WEST HIGHWAY

Middle row;
NORTH-SOUTH EXPRESSWAY;
MIDDLE RING ROAD

Bottom row:
(RURAL ROAD) JALAN MERAPOH-
DADAKERING-PAGARSASAK;
SKUDAI INTERCHANGE

After the tin industry collapsed in the mid 1980s WCT operated mainly as a subcontractor building bridges, roads and highways. It was still a hand-to-mouth existence for the company.

opportunities open, because WCT, being small and unknown, could not compete with the big boys for projects. So the move made potential clients out of the big players rather than have them as competitors.

During this phase, WCT not only built up its expertise in infrastructural work but also amassed a growing fleet of machinery. It also acquired a reputation of being one of the most efficient and capable subcontractors in the industry.

WCT was able to move up the skills and value chain because management wasn't afraid to bring in new talent, provide training and groom leaders within the organization. Certainly it was the 1990s that saw more key personnel being employed, bringing with them their own value add to the company.

Among them were Choe Kai Keong and Goh Chin Liong, both civil engineers. In 1996, Chua Siow Leng was brought in as executive director, responsible for business development abroad. Chua retired in 2009.

One secret of WCT's success was certainly that it has a team of good employees, people who were willing to take up the challenge and work as a team towards a common goal.

When the Malaysian economy started to improve from the late 1980s WCT was ready to ride the economic upcycle. The 1990s saw the Malaysian economy expanding at a fast clip. The government had to build and improve the country's infrastructure in tandem with the economic development.

Against this buoyant backdrop, WCT thrived.

Some of the major projects that it was involved in included infrastructural works on the North-South Highway (Simpang Pulai to Gopeng, and Kulai to Skudai), the Kuala Kangsar-Gerik Highway and bulk earthworks for the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA).

While WCT carved a niche as an efficient subcontractor, the company registered with the Pusat Khidmat Kontraktor, the contractor services division of the Investment Coordination Unit in the Prime Minister's Department, as a Class A contractor in 1987.

(continued on page 82)



GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDINGS
AT LOT 2G3 & 2G4, PUTRAJAYA.



THE CURVE SHOPPING MALL-HOTEL-COMMERCIAL COMPLEX. On the home front, WCT started on the road to building construction, beginning with the five-storey Tractors Malaysia building, and moving on to bigger jobs like The Curve complex and projects in Putrajaya as main contractor on the climb up the value chain.



Left top: GOH CHIN LIONG

Left bottom: CHOE KAI KEONG

The 1990s saw crucial key personnel being employed, adding to the company's talent and expertise pool.

Right: FAMILIES BROWSE AMONG STOCKS OF MID AUTUMN FESTIVAL GOODIES AT THE BANDAR BUKIT TINGGI SHOPPING CENTRE, KLANG. The BBT township hosting the mall is now a bustling hub notwithstanding that it had its naysayers when the plan took off to branch into property, starting with southern Klang.





Opposite page –

KUALA LUMPUR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. In 1996, WCT completed bulk earthworks for KLIA, a major accomplishment in which 50 million cubic metres of earth was excavated! In this upward movement on the value chain, an impressive fleet of machinery was added to the company's arsenal, at once branding it as among the foremost efficient and capable contractors around.

(continued from page 76)

This allowed it to bid for public projects of any size throughout Malaysia. Some of the projects that it bagged as a main contractor included the Guthrie Corridor Expressway (construction started in 2003, and completed in 2005), which was also its first turnkey build-and-design highway project.

The biggest breakthrough that enabled it to make the quantum leap into the big league was when it bagged the RM32 million Selangor Turf Club project in 1992. This was completed in 1993.

It was the biggest both in terms of value and the kind of work involved – indeed, it was the first major infrastructural project that WCT undertook on its own as main contractor, breaking away from being just subcontractor. From then on, there was no looking back.

Goh Chin Liong, deputy managing director, remembers how tough it was for an unknown company to raise financing for the project. “There were initial worries that we could not raise the performance bond, but we managed to do that ... half of the bonds was raised through a bank, and the other half was an insurance bond. The project was the talk of the town ... it was challenging.”

In 1994, the company deemed that the timing was right for it to list on Bursa Malaysia, then known as Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange. In 1995, it was quoted on the Second Board of the stock exchange as WCT Engineering Berhad, the only subcontractor to have done so. In 1999, WCT was transferred to the Main Board.

Then came the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and 1998, which not only sent the whole region's financial markets into a tailspin, but brought the Asian Tiger Economies, Malaysia included, to its knees.

Yet, it was during this turbulent period that WCT once again showed that it thrives even in adversity. For WCT, as cliché as it may sound, the adage – finding opportunities in crises – rings true.



BAKUN DAM IN SARAWAK, UNDER A MORNING DRIZZLE.
As a Class A contractor WCT was able to bid for public projects of any size throughout Malaysia.

This came in the form of the RM302 million Sepang Formula 1 (F1) Circuit project. In 1997, the Malaysian Government decided to build the first modern era F1 circuit in the world.

Bids were called. To cut a long story short, WCT in a JV with Murray & Roberts and Ahmad Zaki, got the job, one that not many contractors dared to do because the consortium was given 14 months to complete the project! With strategic planning, and working round-the-clock mobilising some 2,000 workers, WCT showed its mettle and delivered the project on time.



Sepang F1 not only helped the company pull through yet another crisis, but paved the way for it to become the only company in the world to have built three modern era international F1 circuits, and winning awards for all three – Sepang, Bahrain and the Yas Marina Circuit in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E..

During the crisis period, WCT made another against-the-herd decision – venturing into property development when the economy was in the doldrums. And of all places, it chose southern Klang for its first foray, drawing flak from its detractors. Southern Klang at the time was nothing but vast stretches of oil palm plantations. The buzz was in northern Klang.

Unfazed WCT forged ahead. It launched the first phase of the Bandar Bukit Tinggi township, BBT1, in 1997 and since then there has been a BBT2 and BBT3 (Parklands). The BBT township is today a bustling new hub for Klang, complete with one of the largest Aeon shopping malls in the country and more recently, a spanking new hotel called Première.

A notable fact is that BBT is the only township in the country boasting of two hypermarkets located less than a kilometer from each other.

To augment its expansion into property development and streamline the arm, WCT made a reverse takeover of Bescorp Bhd in 2004, which was subsequently renamed WCT Land Berhad. In 2008, WCT Land was taken private.

In 1999, WCT stepped out of local soil for the first time, venturing into India, and from there, putting footprints in the Middle East – Bahrain, Qatar and

United Arab Emirates.

Domestically WCT did not rest on its laurels. It moved up the value chain in building construction, cutting teeth with the construction of a five-storey building for Tractors Malaysia that included external and internal M&E works. From here, it moved on to bigger projects, including four government office and commercial buildings in Putrajaya and The Curve shopping mall in Damansara Mutiara.

At press time on 26 November 2010, WCT received two prestigious awards from CIDB at the annual Malaysian Construction Industry Excellence Awards (MCIEA) event, namely the 'International Achievement Award 2010' for the Yas Marina Circuit and 'Contractor of the Year Award 2010'.

A race, it has been said,
is not **Won** by the swift
but by **those who**
keep running.
Fast forward to 2011, and
WCT continues to beaver
away at creating value for its
shareholders •



THE MALAYSIAN
CONSTRUCTION
INDUSTRY
AWARDS
2001

AZ - MR - WCT Joint Venture
Special Project
Award

A photograph of the Sepang International F1 Circuit grandstand, featuring a large, curved, yellow and white structure with a multi-level viewing platform. The background shows the race track and other grandstands under a cloudy sky.

a l b u m – AWARDS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

SPECIAL PROJECT AWARD 2001 | SEPANG INTERNATIONAL F1 CIRCUIT, MALAYSIA
Awarded by Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB)





INTERNATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD 2004 | BAHRAIN INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT
Awarded by CIDB





ROAD ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE AWARD 2007 | PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR OF GUTHRIE CORRIDOR EXPRESSWAY, MALAYSIA
Awarded by the Road Engineering Association of Malaysia

Left to right:

BUILDER OF THE YEAR 2002

Awarded by CIDB

INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARD 2004

Awarded by the Ministry of International
Trade & Industry, Malaysia (MITI)

INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARD 2008

Awarded by the Ministry of International
Trade & Industry, Malaysia (MITI)

BRANDLAUREATE AWARD 2009

Winner of the Best Brands for the
Engineering & Construction Category
(2007/2008)

Awarded by Asia Pacific Brand Foundation







CONTRACTOR OF THE YEAR AWARD 2010 | KOTA KINABALU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, SABAH, MALAYSIA
Awarded by CIDB. The WCT team jubilates.







INTERNATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD | YAS MARINA CIRCUIT, ABU DHABI, U.A.E.
Awarded by CIDB

TIMES OF OUR LIVES

THE TWO PIONEERS: MOK KWAI LOY AND PHANG HOCK LOON

Mok Kwai Loy and Phang Hock Loon will go down in the annals of WCT Bhd's history as its two longest serving employees. Indeed, they are the true pioneers, having joined the company from Day 1. Both Mok and Phang have journeyed with the company for 31 years – a year before it was officially incorporated as WCT Earthworks and Building Contractors Sdn Bhd.

Mok has the distinction of being the earliest operator of WCT's first wheel loader – the CAT 950 Shovel.



He joined WCT when he was 26, but at that early age, was already an experienced dragline operator.

In WCT, he gained the reputation of being one of the best operators of the excavators.

“I have hundreds of operators ... but I have not met anyone who is more versatile and efficient than Mok – even the Japanese, who manufactured the heavy equipment, could not match him,” says Managing Director Peter Taing.

“He can fill up to 400 lorry loads a day – others, even the best, can do only 300 loads. His machine is 100% utilized. He is the sifu. Besides that, he also takes good care of the equipment – under his care, the machines hardly break down.”

Mok treasures the machines that he operates. “After so many years of handling them, I have developed an interest, and work has become a hobby.”

“He is happiest when he is behind the wheel of a tractor,” quips Phang.

Mok operated his first dragline when he was just 12 years old. “I left school after Standard Six, and had been working since then, earning about RM20 a month,” he says.

In WCT, he rose up the ranks and was eventually made supervisor. He is described by his bosses as a committed and loyal staff, working side by side with the founders over the years, through sun and rain, to help forge the path to success.

He remembers the years of struggle, the hardships and adversities that the company has gone through. Mok himself had to spend long periods away from home, because after the mid 1980s, many of the earthwork projects undertaken by the company were not in Selangor but spread out across the country.

“We did not think anything of it at the time ... we knew the founders

Opposite page,
clockwise from top portrait:

MOK KWAI LOY

PHANG HOCK LOON

AT THE COMPANY 25TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION DINNER, from left:
WONG SEWE WING, PHANG HOCK LOON,
MOK KWAI LOY AND PETER TAING

WORK IN PROGRESS ON THE
BAKUN DAM RETAINING WALL.
Bakun Dam, by Mok's reckoning, is
among the toughest projects he has
had to face.

very well, having grown up in the same kampong as they, so we were regarded by them as part of a family, like their brothers... we treated the company like our own," he says. "Then when things improved, and there was money, we were well rewarded."

What were the memorable moments?

For Mok, undertaking the Bakun Project was unforgettable. Both he and Phang were among the staff sent to the Bakun area in Sarawak to make first site visit.

"When I first glimpsed the two mountain peaks and the river (the upper Rejang River), I was awed by the vista ... it was going to be a tough job," he recalls.

How tough?

"Just place two star fruits vertically side by side, magnify that many, many times, and in the middle, imagine a raging river ..." that was how the scene looked like," he describes.



The degree of difficulty, insofar as the earthworks part was concerned, was very high because of the lack of access roads and the sheerness of the terrain.

But true to form, WCT managed to overcome the obstacles and completed the job. Mok spent about four years in Bakun, and although he missed home, and the going was tough, he loved certain aspects of the life there – the fresh air, the river fish that he caught and cooked, and the friendships that formed.

Today, Mok is 57 years old. Although he can afford to retire, he is still working in the company as store supervisor. “For as long as my health permits, and I am needed here, I will continue working,” he says with a smile.

Phang and Mok recounted many common episodes as they walked down memory lane together for the purpose of this coffee table book. “We went through the *suin-latt-fu-thim* (the sour, pungent, bitter and sweet) times together,” says Mok.

Phang, like Mok grew up in Puchong. He hung out with Taing when they were kids. Phang and Taing were also classmates until they finished Form 3.

While Taing continued his studies, Phang worked several jobs – he taught driving for a while and his last job before joining WCT was in a furniture factory. “When I was approached by Taing to join WCT, which I did, I knew nothing about earthworks,” he laughs.

He had to learn on the job, and very quickly. Phang was made site supervisor, and put in charge of machinery and procurement of diesel. A few months later, he was put in overall charge of heavy equipment and their maintenance, a post that he still keeps today.

As Phang looks back on the past, he recalls the toughest period for WCT. “It was around 1986 to 1988 – we were really struggling, and we worked every day until almost midnight.”

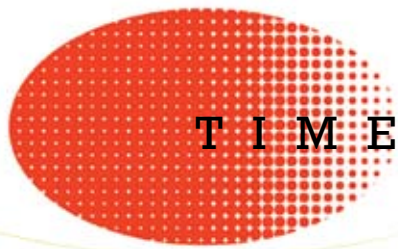
When WCT landed an earthworks contract for the Datai Road project in Langkawi around that time, almost all the staff were mobilized and sent to the work site, leaving only skeleton personnel in HQ, with Taing and him holding fort.

“I had to stay in HQ because I was purchasing spare parts. We would wait every night for our people to call from Langkawi to tell us what they needed, and the next day, after buying all the required parts, I would drive all the way to Pudu in the evening to dispatch them by bus. On the way back, which was always around eight or nine at night, I would pack dinner for Peter and myself,” Phang reminisces.

Dinner, he says, always consisted of the same items – it was either big paus (dumplings), roti canai, nasi lemak or loh mai kai (pulut rice with chicken).

“As we ate dinner, we would wait for the phone calls which usually came very late because the supervisors in Langkawi had to drive out from the site to the town of Kuah after work to make the calls. “There was only one public phone in Kuah,” explains Phang.

For Phang and Mok, the last 31 years, although tough in the beginning, have been fulfilling ones. When they look back and reflect on what they have been through, and what has been achieved, they can proudly say, they had a hand in WCT’s success, they have fought the hard fight, and won •



T I M E S O F O U R L I V E S

STAFF SHARE THEIR JOURNEY

WCT'S SUCCESS TODAY IS BUILT ON ITS STRONG WORKFORCE – MANY ARE LOYAL EMPLOYEES FROM RANK AND FILE, WHO HAVE TOILED AND STAYED WITH THE COMPANY THROUGH THICK AND THIN.

AMONG THEMSELVES THEY HAVE BECOME GOOD FRIENDS, NOT JUST COLLEAGUES, BECAUSE THEY HAVE WORKED ALONGSIDE EACH OTHER FOR MANY YEARS.

THEY ARE THE UNSUNG HEROES AND HEROINES WHO HAVE HELPED BUILD WCT. MANY AMONG THEM HAVE CLOCKED MORE THAN 20 YEARS WITH THE COMPANY.

FOR THIS COMMEMORATIVE BOOK, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO FEATURE THEM ALL EXCEPT FOR A HANDFUL.

THESE HAVE EACH THEIR OWN STORY TO TELL AS THEY WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE. IN ALL THE ACCOUNTS, THERE IS A RECURRENT THEME – THE WILLINGNESS TO PUT IN AN HONEST DAY'S WORK TO SURMOUNT THE CHALLENGES THAT ADVERSITY AND CRISES BRING.

THE COMPANY'S FIRST OFFICE IN
OLD KLANG ROAD.

For long-service staff this old
signboard would surely evoke
memories.



MOHD ROSLAN SARIP, PROJECT DIRECTOR

Roslan Sarip grew up in Sekinchan, the rice bowl of Selangor. His parents were paddy farmers, and money was scarce. He studied hard, determined to make something of himself, and not be trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty.

Roslan managed to win a scholarship to take up a degree in civil engineering in the US. He worked with the government for a few years, and found that it was not what he wanted.

In 1990, he applied and got a job with WCT simply because at the interview, he told the bosses: “Give me a chance”.

Since then here has been no looking back for him. Roslan enjoys working for the company, even during the lean times, when it could not pay him a big salary. “For me, money isn’t everything,” Roslan says. “What is more important is that I feel like part of a family in WCT ...



the bosses and the employees **work together,**
riding out the **downturns** and enjoying the rewards at
the **upswings**. We are united.”

Certainly the road that Roslan travelled with WCT for the last 20 years has been a bumpy one. In the 1990s, WCT was still in the nascent stages of growth, and had taken on some very tough projects to entrench itself in the industry.

He is a hands-on manager, and doesn’t think twice about pitching in when there is a necessity.

Managing director Peter Taing remembers one occasion when he visited the Bukit Sagu project in Pahang in 1991.

“It was raining cats and dogs, a drain was stuck, and there was Roslan, in the drain, soaked, removing the debris, alongside the Indonesian construction workers.”



**LIM SWEE HOCK,
SENIOR PROJECT
MANAGER**

In 1989, when Lim Swee Hock graduated from college, a friend recommended him to work for WCT Bhd. He did not have to write any letter of application. He presented himself and got the job as

technical assistant. Since then, there hasn't been any need to write job application letters – he has stayed on the job for 22 years now, and is one of the longest-serving and trusted lieutenants of the company.

Lim remembers turning up for his first day of work – it was the eighth day of the Chinese New Year in February. “I got into a car at the office in Old Klang road and was driven to Pengkalan Hulu (then known as Kroh, a border town in northern Peninsular Malaysia). There I was asked to look for Mr Mok. He looked at me, and asked, ‘you new’? And then he said, ‘ok, start work tomorrow’. I did, and I have not stopped since,” Lim says, laughing.

His salary was RM550 a month. It wasn't much, because at the time, WCT was still a fledgling company trying to find its niche.

Lim, managed to cope though, perhaps because the

cost of living then was very low. A meal, he says, cost only RM2!

Time flew for Lim as he was moved from one project to another, mainly in earthwork infrastructure. The economy was picking up, jobs were aplenty, and WCT slowly gained ground as a reliable subcontractor in the industry.

The schedule was so tight, Lim says he hardly spent time with his family. “I was working outstation most of the time, and we were so busy, I hardly had time to think of anything else ... even before the road project in Pengkalan Hulu was completed, I was transferred to Grik.”

He was based in Pengkalan Hulu for two years. Some of the projects that he helped to complete successfully included the KLIA bulk earthworks, Bakun Hydroelectric Dam and the infrastructure works at the Yas Marina Circuit, Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.

Lim rose up the ranks quickly. Learning on the job was a rich experience, largely because he was exposed to many different projects. Later, when WCT ventured overseas, he was among the pioneers who anchored the company's foray abroad, particularly India.

Lim is satisfied with what he has achieved in his 22 years with WCT.

“The company has given me
the opportunities
to grow,” he says.



ONG KA THIAM, HEAD OF TECHNICAL

When the group of senior WCT executives got together for this interview, Ong Ka Thiam appeared to have the fairest skin among them all. The rest – Lim, Roslan, Phang and Mok all looked very tanned, weather beaten.

“He doesn’t work at the site anymore, always in office - promoted,” Lim teases.

Ong first joined WCT as site supervisor in 1989. His first project was the construction of an oxidation pond in Datuk Keramat. After six months, he was moved to Pandan Perdana, then to Pandan Jaya and later to Ampang, dealing mainly with earthworks and infrastructural works for housing development. Later, he moved to building works.

What Ong likes in WCT is the upward mobility of his career during the 22 years that he has been with the company. “I was involved in different types of projects ... starting from earthworks to the construction of big buildings,” according to Ong.

It was also a good learning experience because of the excellent communication channel between senior management and staff. “There were always consultations when we worked together to solve problems.

We also knew what was **involved**, the company’s
plans, and how to **move** forward.”

Along the way Ong attended courses to improve himself. In 1998 he pursued part-time degree studies, recognizing that as the company moved up the value chain, he too needed to adapt, and this would require new skills, among other things.

Like many of WCT’s long serving staff, Ong moved up the career ladder rung by rung. By 2002, he had progressed from site supervisor to site manager, then project manager and finally, Head of Technical.



LEONG YEON THOONG, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, MIDDLE EAST

When Leong Yeon Thoong joined WCT in 1985 as a technical assistant, he became the fourth person in the “head office”, a shoplot along Old Klang Road.

“Besides me, there were Peter Taing and two clerks. Mr Wong Sewe Wing, Mr Mok Kwai Loy and Mr Phang Hock Loon were on the sites,” he remembers.

In the beginning, because of the lean staffing, Leong had to take on many tasks, from the big to the menial, including procurement and business development. It was a steep learning curve.

But on hindsight, the exposure to almost every aspect of the company in the early years helped Leong develop into a versatile and able manager.

Leong opines that the mid 1980s were the toughest years for WCT. “Had the company not pulled through, the company might not be what it is today.”

Being one of the earliest employees, Leong remembers the years of struggle. “The good thing was, all of us worked as a team, we struggled together and we lived within our means.”

“Going through both the bad and good times together helped
mould us in maturity,

in how we see things ... how we must always think out of the box, and that there are two sides to the same coin.”

Today Leong is regional director, Middle East. “In a blink of the eye, I have been with the company for 25 years,” he says.



NG ENG KEAT, REGIONAL DIRECTOR (SOUTH EAST ASIA)

Ng Eng Keat is a busy man – he has one of the biggest portfolios in WCT to supervise and manage.

As regional director overseeing Asean operations, Ng has under his care operations that range from purchasing, contracts and quality control.

Not surprisingly, he is involved in lots of meetings, and is always on the go. But Ng says he likes it, because it means the company is doing well.

He is an optimist, and sees the glass as half full, not half empty. “The harder the nature of the work, the closer to each other we become.”

Ng started bottom up, as a quantity surveyor in 1990 and was later promoted to senior quantity surveyor, then contract manager to the general manager and today, regional director.

“I am very satisfied in terms of my career growth,” Ng says. Construction, he explains, is hard work and cyclical. There are both the hard times and the good times.

“But most importantly, we all **work as a team.**”



NGU LING ING, SENIOR FINANCE EXECUTIVE

Miss Ngu extends her hand, displaying proudly a Dunhill Millenium watch on her wrist. It was given to her when WCT celebrated its 20th anniversary. “I also have a Tag Heuer at home – it was presented to long serving staff at the 25th anniversary,” she tells us.

Ngu started as an accounts clerk in 1989 when the company was still small, but she liked it then, because the office was cosy and “everyone knew each other”.

“At the time, we had to count the salaries manually, and we worked till late at night when it was pay time,” she recalls.

Ngu likes what she does and has stayed on over the years because

she feels **secure** in her job,

knowing that the employers take good care of their staff. “When I fell quite sick a few years ago, the company helped me through it.”

A happy moment, she says, was when she was given the option to be really a part of the company through an employee share options scheme (ESOS) when WCT was listed in 1995.

“It was my first ESOS.”

MOHD RAFI ABU BAKAR, DESPATCH CUM DRIVER

Rafi is one of the most familiar faces in WCT – he is the company’s first despatch person. He came on board in 1987 and has stayed.

What does he remember the most during his 23-year journey?

It was the way tenders for jobs were submitted in the 1980s. “At the time, one of the things I had to do was to go to Ipoh and submit tenders for jobs. I would take the bus, submit the papers, stay overnight and come back the next day.”

Cheque collection was another. “Peter would ask me to go and collect the cheques when they were ready, and sometimes, I had to go to Ipoh (WCT’s main contractor and client was based there)... I had to wait until I got it, and then phone the boss.”



Those days, a cheque for RM100,000 was
a small **fortune** for the company.

“Today, it has become millions,” says Rafi.

In the 1990s, when the company moved to its new headquarters in Glenmarie Industrial Park in Shah Alam, Rafi took on an additional role as van driver. There was no direct public transport to the new office, so the company had to provide the service for its staff.

Rafi enjoys his job, as it is not desk-bound, and allows him to go out a lot. He has been with WCT for 23 years, during which time, his children have grown up, and two of daughters have even worked stints at WCT •

a l b u m –
'SAFETY FIRST' IN PUTRAJAYA





Opposite page:

AT THE PUTRAJAYA LOT 4G8 and 4G9
WORKSITE, A TOWER CRANE SWINGS
INTO MOTION.

The machine is routinely
and vigorously checked to ensure
100% safety.

Left: BODY HARNESS.

At the WCT Putrajaya worksite, all
contractors are required to provide
full body harness, safety shoes,
helmets and other safety equipment
and tools while on the site.





Left: THE GERMAN MADE GONDOLA. Capable of lifting weights up to 250kg during a full operation it is the largest gondola in Malaysia, and second largest in Asia. Its telescopic boom can be extended up to a maximum 34m in a horizontal direction.

Below: SENIOR SITE ENGINEER HANIFF BIN MOHD SAHARIN (LEFT), WITH SAFETY & HEALTH OFFICER AZIZUL B. MAT DIN (RIGHT). His task is to ensure that all site activity complies with safety regulations and procedures, and to work closely with other related departments like Safety, M & E and Architectural.

Following page: VERTIGO INDUCING RIDE ON THE GONDOLA CAPTURED A RARE VIEW OF THE WORKSITE BELOW. The potential for hazards and danger while working at heights cannot be over-emphasised. Besides programmes to expose workers to safety issues, the motto in circumstances such as these is necessarily "Safety Is Everybody's Business".







PART 3

PANORAMA

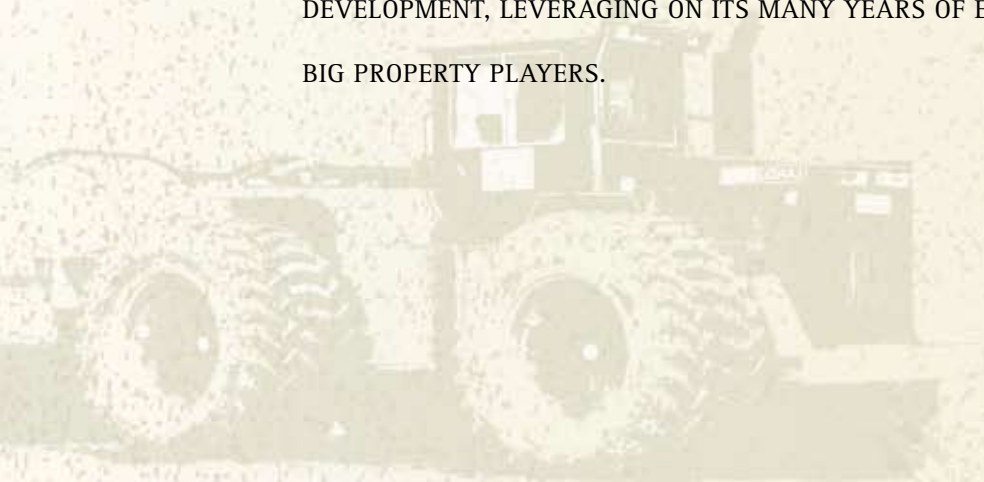


BUILDING THE BAHRAIN INTERNATIONAL F1 CIRCUIT, CIRCA 2003

THE WCT STORY... **CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION** _HAVING SPENT ALMOST TWO DECADES TO FIRMLY ENTRENCH ITSELF AS A CONTRACTOR OF CALIBRE IN THE LOCAL CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, WCT WAS READY CAST ITS SIGHTS FURTHER FROM THE LATE 1990S ONWARDS IN SEARCH OF NEW INCOME STREAMS.

AND LIKE A BIRD ON THE WING, IT VENTURED ABROAD, LANDING FIRST IN INDIA AND THEN FURTHER AFIELD IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

AS IT MOVED UP THE CONSTRUCTION VALUE CHAIN AT HOME, WCT DIVERSIFIED INTO PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT, LEVERAGING ON ITS MANY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE GAINED AS A SUBCONTRACTOR FOR THE BIG PROPERTY PLAYERS.



A TRAVELLER'S TALE

GOH CHIN LIONG

IN 1991, WHEN GOH CHIN LIONG JOINED WCT AS SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER AND ENGINEER, THE COMPANY WAS ALREADY GROWING STEADILY, BUT SLOWLY. THE EARLY AND TOUGHEST YEARS OF THE 1980S WERE BEHIND, AND WCT WAS READY TO MOVE ON, TO EMBARK ON ITS NEXT GROWTH PHASE.

“When Goh came, he brought with him new expertise ... he had his own thinking and vision, and he said, ‘why just focus on earthworks and infrastructure – we must do everything, including building works’,” says managing director Peter Taing.

According to Goh, who is trained as a civil engineer, the founders had laid a very strong base for the company during the first 10 years. “When I joined,

THE MAIN CHALLENGES WERE TO
SUSTAIN THE BUSINESS, AND
THAT WAS **TOUGH** BECAUSE
CONSTRUCTION IS A CYCLICAL
BUSINESS.



WCT was growing, and when there is growth, many of its people will grow together, so the opportunity was given to me.”

“Management at the time, especially Peter, was very focused, and also very far sighted ... so the company was able to grow very fast during the 1990s.”

He moved up the ranks very quickly. In 1995, he was promoted to general manager (construction division) with expanded responsibilities for the group’s overall construction activities. He was made Executive Director in 1996, and in 2001, became deputy managing director.

The last 20 years, says Goh, has had its ups and downs. “The main challenges were to sustain the business, and that was tough because construction is a cyclical business. You can get a few jobs today, but tomorrow, you worry about where the next will come from.”

Still, under his direction and supported by an able team of dedicated staff, Goh has been credited with securing substantial construction contracts both locally and overseas. In 2009 alone, the notable contracts included the new earthworks package at the Low Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT), the infra works for Medini,

Iskandar Malaysia and additional works for the New Doha International Airport in Qatar.

Goh takes pride in the fact that WCT has grown to what it is today. “It is not about luck ... luck does not come to a company just like that, you have to work hard for it.”

He attributes WCT’s success to the strong teamwork in the company. “In construction, the biggest challenge is harnessing resources, how to drive people to work. In WCT, I think we have achieved that quite well ... we try to communicate with every level of our staffers.”

Having a boss who is always imparting little gems of wisdom to his people helped, he says. “Peter is English educated, but his philosophy is very Chinese. Sometimes, he surprises us with his quotes and idioms, which focus a lot on ethics, and this culture of ethics, through the years, has been instilled in the company because there is good communication through the ranks.”

What is etched in his mind, Goh says, is the phrase ‘Bite like a bulldog’ that Taing uses frequently. “It means we must stay focused, and we must never give up on anything that we have taken on. When he talks like this all the time, we tend to be influenced” •

THE WCT STORY... **GOING PLACES**

THE LATE 1990S UNTIL THE EARLY 2000S WAS A CHALLENGING PERIOD FOR MALAYSIA'S CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES. THE ASIAN FINANCIAL CRISIS OF 1997-98 PUT AN END TO THE CONSTRUCTION BOOM OF THE EARLY 1990S, AND AS THE GOVERNMENT REINED IN FISCAL SPENDING, A FEWER NUMBER OF PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS WERE IMPLEMENTED.

TO SURVIVE, MANY MALAYSIAN COMPANIES BEGAN TO LOOK MORE AGGRESSIVELY ABROAD. IT WAS AGAINST THIS BACKDROP THAT WCT MADE ITS FIRST FORAY OVERSEAS, LEARNING FROM ITS EXPERIENCE IN INDIA AND EVENTUALLY, SUCCESSFULLY CARVING A NAME FOR ITSELF IN THE MIDDLE EAST.



When local construction jobs started dwindling in the late 1990s and with competition heating up, management at WCT decided that it was time to look overseas.

“At that time, our thinking was, with the shortage of jobs, the company would suffer anyway, whether in a small pool or big ocean. So rather than swim in a pool of red with thousands of other construction companies, we decided that we had to go out and try in the bigger blue ocean, where there were more opportunities,” says managing director Peter Taing.



India was a challenge...because it was a
different playing field altogether.

The first foray was in India, where WCT was part of a five-member consortium of Malaysian companies, spearheaded by the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) on a government-to-government initiative in the late 1990s, that secured the Tada-Nellore Highway in Andhra Pradesh, India on a build-operate-transfer (BOT) basis.

In 2002, the company bagged another two BOT projects in India – the Panagapur-Palsit and Durgapur Expressways.

India was a challenge, partly because it was the first time WCT had gone abroad, and also because it was a different playing field altogether. “But it was a very good learning experience – we learnt what to do, and what not to do,” says Taing.

Leong Yeon Thoong, regional director, Middle East, was one of the first among WCT staff to step foot on Indian soil. He remembers feeling apprehensive when he saw how different and tough the environment was.

Back home a challenge for the company was convincing its staff to work in India. “But even then there was one advantage for us. In Malaysia we were already used to travelling and working outstation, so India wasn’t that difficult,” says Leong.

Lim Swee Hock, senior project manager, was among the pioneering team sent to India. “One day, my boss called me, and said, ‘Lim, you go to India next week’ ... so I went, not knowing what to expect, as I had never been there before.”

The initial period was tough. “Everything was different. The people behaved differently and we had to handle them differently ... they were always protesting about one issue or another,” Lim recalls with a chuckle. “But we got used to it.”

Tough as it was, WCT completed and delivered the Tada-Nellore project in 2004. Today, the other two projects have also been completed. In October 2010, WCT sold its stake in the Tada-Nellore Highway concessionaire to IJM Corporation.

(continued on page 128)

Opposite page top:
DURGAPUR EXPRESSWAY TOLL GATE,
WEST BENGAL, INDIA.

Opposite page bottom:
TADA-NELLORE HIGHWAY IN ANDHRA
PRADESH, INDIA.

WCT's first overseas foray was in
India, working with a five-member
consortium of Malaysian companies
spearheaded by the Construction
Industry Development Board (CIDB).





Below: AL-SEEF FLYOVER.

This was one of two infrastructure projects that WCT bagged while working in the Middle East on the Bahrain International Circuit.





(continued from page 123)

Bahrain was WCT's second destination. In 2002, thanks to its track record in building the Sepang Formula 1 Circuit, the world's first modern era F1 racing track, WCT was approached by the Bahrain government to participate in the construction of the Bahrain International Circuit.

Bahrain was a major breakthrough for WCT in the global arena. It delivered the project on time, in a record 16 months. In fact, the project was delivered two days before the deadline, despite the high technical demands and unfavourable weather conditions. The project won it the MCIEA International Achievement Award in 2004.

In Bahrain, while construction of the Bahrain International Circuit was still in progress, it made a bid for two infrastructure projects and landed both Government contracts in 2003 – the Al-Seef Flyover – North Manama Corridor Improvement Project and the highway link to Durat Al-Bahrain, now known as the King Hamad Highway.

In 2006, having already carved a niche in the Gulf, WCT won its first overseas building contract, which was also its biggest in Bahrain – the RM1.28 billion Bahrain City Centre project.

From Bahrain, WCT made inroads into Qatar. In 2005, the company secured two major projects in Qatar. One was the 43-km West Dukhan Highway in a JV with Gamuda Bhd and the second, the provision of airfield paving, tunnel and detention ponds for the New Doha International Airport in a JV with Gamuda and China's Sinohydro Corp.

By then, WCT had established a sound reputation for itself as a contractor of global calibre. Its track record helped it enter Dubai and Abu Dhabi in 2007. In Dubai, together with a local partner Arabtec Construction LLC, it won the RM4.2 billion Meydan Racecourse project, but the contract was terminated in 2008, amid the onset of the global financial crisis.

Opposite page top:
WEST DUKHAN HIGHWAY, QATAR

Opposite page bottom:
CONSTRUCTION OF TUNNELS AT THE
NEW DOHA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT,
QATAR

Making inroads into Qatar, WCT
teamed with Gamuda in constructing
the 43-km West Dukhan Highway,
then proceeded to the New Doha
International Airport to provide
airfield paving, tunnel and detention
ponds with Gamuda and China's
Sinohydro Corp.



But the feather in WCT's cap must surely be the construction of the RM4.4 billion Yas Marina Circuit, which was completed in time (28 months) to host the inaugural Abu Dhabi F1 Grand Prix on 1 November 2009. At the same time, WCT and its partner were also building the Yas Marina Royal Yacht Club, a prestigious and high profile project which will be used to host the royal families and guests of Abu Dhabi for the Grand Prix.

In October 2010, WCT bagged another project in Qatar – the contract for the construction and maintenance of the RM1.36 billion government administration building in Doha. The project is scheduled for completion by May 2013 •



Opposite page:

YAS MARINA CIRCUIT. WCT's feather-in-the-cap project was completed in time to hold the inaugural Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on 1 November 2009.

Below:

YAS MARINA ROYAL YACHT CLUB. The perfectly regal venue to host the royal families and distinguished guests during the Abu Dhabi F1 Grand Prix.



A TRAVELLER'S TALE

CHOE KAI KEONG



WHEN WCT DIVERSIFIED INTO PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT IN 1997, THE MAN CHOSEN TO LEAD THE CHARGE WAS CHOE KAI KEONG, A CIVIL ENGINEER BY PROFESSION.

Choe joined WCT in 1990 as project manager, a job that was very different from what he was doing before. “It was a complete change for me, I was doing engineering work in Kelantan as a consultant on a flood mitigation project. I did not know much about earthworks and the construction industry.”

But Choe learnt very fast, and one of the things he realised when one worked for a company like WCT, was that he had to change very quickly from being consultant to businessman.


“I was still very much a consultant when I joined WCT. One day Peter said to me, ‘Choe, you’d better be both an engineer and a businessman’. So, I took stock, and this transition has been important for me.”

During his 20 years with WCT, as the company moved up the value chain of the construction industry, Choe had the opportunity to be in the thick of things, from earthworks in the beginning to infrastructure and building works later.

Within a year of joining, Choe was made general manager. In 1998, he was put in charge of property development. “At first, I was wearing two hats, but by 2000, I was fully involved in property development.”

He was made executive director of WCT Land Berhad, the WCT Group’s property arm, which was listed on Bursa Malaysia in 2004 but taken private in 2008. Choe was redesignated executive director of WCT Berhad in April 2008, to focus on the group’s property division.

Choe remembers that when the Bandar Bukit Tinggi (BBT)



IT HAS BEEN ONE STEEP LEARNING CURVE, BUT
FULFILLING ... THE COMPANY ENSURES THAT ALL
ITS EMPLOYEES FEEL PART OF THE ORGANISATION.
THE BOSSES WALK WITH US AS A TEAM.

township was first conceived, the idea was to build bungalows. But BBT was happening when Malaysia was facing the start of a recession caused by the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis. “It was lean times, who would want to buy bungalows?”

So, a rethink was necessary, and finally, the company decided that BBT should be a mixed development project.

“When we started BBT1, we did not have a brand name. People would ask, ‘who is WCT? Can it deliver’? So, at first, the sales were not very good, but management decided to continue building to gain the confidence of the market.”

Sales began to pick up slowly, partly due to the recovery from the recession, according to Choe. BBT has since taken off in a big way, surpassing the expectations of everyone.

“Nobody knew that BBT could become so successful ... but with hard work, perseverance and clarity of vision, it happened.”

WCT, says Choe, is poised for some exciting times ahead, what with its projects in Kelana Jaya, in Iskandar Malaysia and in Vietnam.

As he reflects on how far he has journeyed and what he has achieved in the company, he is satisfied with what has been accomplished and the things he has learnt.

“It has been one steep learning curve, but fulfilling ... the company ensures that all its employees feel part of the organisation. The bosses walk with us as a team” •

THE WCT STORY...

FORAY INTO PROPERTY

WHEN WCT DECIDED THAT THE TIME WAS RIPE FOR IT TO VENTURE INTO PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT IN THE MID 1990S, IT CHOSE KLANG, THE ROYAL TOWN OF SELANGOR, AND HOME TO PORT KLANG – ONE OF THE BUSIEST PORTS IN THE REGION.

HOWEVER, ITS DECISION TO BUY ITS FIRST PLOT OF PLANTATION LAND MEASURING 347 ACRES IN SOUTHERN KLANG IN 1996 HAD ITS SHARE OF DETRACTORS. AT THAT TIME, KLANG WASN'T EXACTLY THE HOTTEST GROWTH SPOT IN THE KLANG VALLEY, AND THE LAND, PURCHASED AT RM500,000 AN ACRE WAS CONSIDERED EXPENSIVE.





CONCOURSE OF THE AEON BUKIT
TINGGI SHOPPING CENTRE, KLANG.
At opening hour the crowds begin
to trickle in, and swell by lunchtime.
Whether they have come in frenetic
search of the retail offerings or
simply to slurp up the wide variety of
culinary delights, the mall is one hot
destination to chill out on a weekend.



Southern Klang, in particular, was quiet and dominated by stretches and stretches of oil palm plantations. The hustle and bustle was in the north, the pulse centre of the town.

So, owning a property in this coastal town, and more so in the less developed part, wasn't exactly on top of the buy list for many house buyers and investors alike.

To many, the idea of using Klang as a launchpad into property development did not seem like a good value proposition at the time.

Yet, contrarian to a certain extent and perhaps, blessed with the ability to see beyond the present, management at WCT saw Klang's potential. At that time, northern Klang was already getting congested, and traffic jams were common.

WCT took the risk and made the bold move to use southern Klang as its maiden development location. It launched the first phase of the Bandar Bukit Tinggi (BBT) integrated township project in 1997. There has been no looking back since. In the last decade or so, WCT has launched two other townships in southern Klang, and each has been a success.

BBT1, as the township is today popularly called, was undertaken on a joint venture basis with MTD Capital Bhd. The two partners set up a JV company, Labur Bina Sdn Bhd, in which WCT Realty, now WCT Land Sdn Bhd, owned 50% and MTD the rest.

When WCT started BBT1, Malaysia, like the rest of Asia, had just been struck by the Asian financial crisis. It was tough, because the company was the new kid on the block, was unknown and its products untested.

When the houses were ready, it took a bit of time for the Klang residents and those from outside the town to warm up to the idea of owning a home in southern Klang. But when the potential buyers saw the quality, the facilities and amenities, all doubts were put to rest, and demand heated up.

(continued on page 146)

Opposite page: WCT LAND SDN BHD
IN BBT1, KLANG. Overseeing the
development of the entire township
comprising BBT1, BBT2, and BBT3
(Parklands), this property arm of WCT
spearheads development of the entire
WCT property tract in south Klang





Opposite page top: BBT_ONE-THE TOWERS, BANDAR BUKIT TINGGI, KLANG. The signage says the space is ready to take in buyers or renters. This high rise towers building which was designed to cater to commercial enterprises like shipping companies, financial institutions and government agencies, comes complete with a modern corporate office environment and a spacious entrance lobby.

Opposite page bottom: BOULEVARD AT BBT_ONE, BANDAR BUKIT TINGGI, KLANG. The low-rise Boulevard when fully operational hopes to draw the crowds looking for al fresco dining and street-mall shopping.





PREMIÈRE HOTEL'S SOFT OPENING,
11 OCTOBER 2010 –

Left: CLASH OF CYMBALS AND ROLL OF
DRUMS.

Bottom left: RED-RIBBONED ENTRANCE.

Bottom right: LIONS' GOOD FORTUNE DANCE
RITUAL.

Opposite top: MINUTES TO THE OFFICIAL
OPENING, WCT DIRECTORS SHOW THE
THUMBS UP.

Opposite bottom: HOTEL STAFF AT
THE READY.

Première in BBT 1, Klang, is a business
class hotel incorporating banquet venue
convenience, comfortable rooms and trendy
facilities.





Below: BLUE SKIES BACKDROP THE AEON
BUKIT TINGGI SHOPPING CENTRE, KLANG.

Opposite page top: BBT2 RESIDENCES
PHOTOGRAPHED FROM THE ROOFTOP OF
THE MALL.

Opposite page bottom: THE MALL'S DOME,
VIEWED FROM THE CONCOURSE FLOOR
LOOKING UP.

Bukit Tinggi Shopping Centre sits across
from the sold-out BBT2 residences. Spanning
three levels of retail floors and 5,000 parking
bays, the mall, AEON's largest in Malaysia,
and second largest in Asia, opened on 24
November 2007, lifting Klang's status on par
with other upscale townships dotting the
Klang Valley.







PARKLANDS IN BANDAR BUKIT
TINGGI, KLANG

Opposite page left and right:
D'BANYAN RESIDENCY @ SUTERA,
KOTA KINABALU

The houses are bigger, the roads
wider and the designs embody style
and appeal.



(continued from page 136)

WCT walked the extra mile to ensure that its houses were compelling buys. The appeal lies in the product offerings, from the design to the size of the units, the infrastructure and the amenities available. The houses are bigger and the roads, wider than the existing townships.

At the same time, the company realised that a township cannot be centred around residential property development alone; that to make the place vibrant and bustling, it had to provide amenities like shopping outlets, eateries, banks and other commercial and social facilities.

In view of this, apart from shophouses during the initial phase, WCT brought in two hypermarkets – Giant and Tesco. It was quite a coup – the hypermarkets helped create a lot of buzz, and the surrounding shophouses benefited from the multiplier impact.

At the same time it also moved into development of high-rise buildings – the BBT_One-The Towers and a business hotel, the Première, which opened its doors for business on 11 October, 2010.

Since BBT1, another two phases, BBT2 and Bandar Parklands - BBT3, have been launched in 2001 and 2005, respectively. BBT2 is complete except for a few pockets of commercial land, while Parklands is in progress. Since its inception, property values in and around the BBT township have appreciated significantly.

BBT2, sitting on 427 acres, was launched in 2001 with a gross development value (GDV) of RM1.5 billion (revisions made over the years and it is now RM1.9 billion). On the commercial front, WCT built and rented out the Bukit Tinggi Shopping Centre in BBT2, the largest AEON (Jusco)-managed mall in South-East Asia.

BBT3, a 427-acre project also known as Parklands, is 2km away south of BBT1 and 2. It is yet another integrated township comprising bungalows, semidees, terraced houses and shop offices with emphasis on greenery, modern living and gated communities.

The BBT integrated township is WCT's property flagship, and total development acreage has swelled to more than 1,300 acres. To date, WCT has delivered more than 12,000 residential and commercial properties, with GDV of some RM2.9 billion.

Over the last 14 years, BBT has transformed itself into one of the fastest growing townships in the Klang Valley.

It is becoming the new commercial hub of Klang.

Not only has WCT successfully etched its name as a prominent developer with a reputation for delivering quality homes, it has also contributed to making southern Klang a vibrant and bustling new growth corridor.

Armed with this success, WCT ventured beyond Klang in 2006. It embarked on the development of a new commercial project in Kelana Jaya, Selangor, and an upmarket residential development in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

The Paradigm project in Kelana Jaya comprises several high-rise towers and a shopping mall on a 12.9-acre tract of land that is strategically located along Lebuhraya Damansara-Puchong (LDP).

In Kota Kinabalu, the d'Bayan Residences project involved development of villas, semidees and super-linked homes which are surrounded by a 27-hole golf course with an excellent view of the South China Sea.

More recently in 2009, WCT cast its net further south, to Iskandar Malaysia, the new growth corridor in Johor. It entered into a joint venture with Iskandar Investment Bhd, a unit of Khazanah Nasional to develop a 10.96-acre of land designated for high-rise

condominium development.

The project, 1Medini Residences @ Medini Iskandar Malaysia has a GDV of RM600 million, comprising 1,341 residential units that will cater to demand from students, staff and executives working in the catalytic developments within Medini, and these include the Newcastle University, Legoland, Malborough College and Raffles University.

In 2010, WCT added to its landbank when it acquired two pieces of land in Bukit Jelutong and Klang (near Parklands) for future development.

The fact that WCT has come of age as a property developer of repute is demonstrated by yet another bold decision to spread its wings abroad.

It is currently exploring opportunities in Vietnam, a new emerging economy in Asean with a market size of 80 million people, for its first overseas foray in property development •

BY THE WAY

A glimpse of Klang

For many people, the name of Klang conjures up images of steaming bowls of bak-kut-teh and yau-cha-kueh.

Klang, the royal town of Selangor, is also associated with the sea and fresh seafood.

Yet, there is more to Klang than food. It is among the earliest port towns founded in Peninsular Malaysia, mainly because of its strategic location. It is also of importance as gateway into the Klang Valley – the richest industrial belt of the country.

The economy of Klang, for the longest time, revolved around Port Klang, which has been ranked the 13th busiest transshipment port and the 16th busiest container port in the world.

Klang town, the capital of Selangor in the 1970s, is about 6km away from the port, and derived its name, according to the Wikipedia, from the Klang River, which slits the town into north and south.

For many years, development was centred around North Klang. The southern part did not begin to stir until the last two decades, mainly due to spillover development effects not just in Klang itself but also from the rest of the Klang Valley, particularly Petaling Jaya and Kuala Lumpur.

As the two areas become more overcrowded and overbuilt, outlying satellite areas like Puchong and Klang began to take off. Of the two, Puchong was the first to boom as a self-contained township.

Even at the time of this writing, Klang is a bustling and vibrant township. There has been a significant rise in business activities in the commercial areas. Today, Klang is home to Aeon's largest shopping



complex in Southeast Asia. Hypermarkets like Tesco and Giant have also set up shop in southern Klang.

Yet, the potential of Klang has not been fully realized despite the development that has taken place. The population is growing, and stands today at around 1.05 million, due in large part, to the many new townships like WCT's Bandar Bukit Tinggi that have sprung up.

Improved connectivity to Klang is also a boost, thanks to the multiple access points provided by new highways such as the Shah Alam Expressway (Kesas) and the North Klang Valley Expressway •

AT THIS TWILIGHT HOUR IN OCTOBER 2010, JALAN TENGGU KELANA (SELANGOR'S LITTLE INDIA) WAITS FOR THE PRE-DEEPAVLI CROWDS TO POUR IN. For most of its existence, development in Klang took place north of the Klang River. The south began to stir only in the last two decades as a spillover result of the overcrowding and overbuilding, not only in north Klang, but also of Petaling Jaya and Kuala Lumpur.



A TRAVELLER'S TALE


CHUA SIOW LENG

WHEN CHUA SIOW LENG WAS AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF WCT, HE OFTEN WAS INVITED TO GIVE TALKS ON THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.

This is not surprising, given that he has more than 35 years of experience under his belt, some 13 of which was spent in WCT. Chua joined WCT in 1996 as executive director overseeing business development and strategies particularly when WCT was expanding into India and the Middle East.

Chua has retired from service at WCT now. From 2009 to currently he has taken up the post of Honorary Advisor to the Education and Training Committee of the Master Builders Association of Malaysia (MBAM).





WCT, he opines, has an interesting story to tell, as it is a fine example of the few companies that grew organically and at the same time, had moved successfully up the construction value chain.

He remembers WCT in the early days, when some 80% of its jobs were on a sub-contracting basis. “To move on to bigger things, especially if it wanted to go abroad, the company must bid for more government jobs on its own.”

So, it was during the mid 1990s, after it was successfully registered as a Class A contractor, that WCT began bidding for contracts on its own and winning some of them. According to Chua, WCT was competitive because it was cost efficient, and it has a very strong operational team.

It was the construction of the Sepang F1 Circuit that entrenched WCT’s reputation as a company that can deliver, and which led its venture into the Middle East, where it built the Bahrain International Circuit and later the Yas Marina Circuit on the joint venture basis with Cebarco Bahrain SPC.

“While we were waiting for the Bahrain F1 project to be finalized, we bid for another two projects there and we were successful in both,” he says.

Chua says that from WCT’s first foray overseas into India, valuable lessons were learnt. “It was not easy operating in a foreign country ... there were many challenges, and we found that finding the right partner was very important.” •

BY THE WAY

Fair weather in construction



Opposite page, top and bottom:
 BUSY MORNING SCENE, PARADIGM
 PROJECT WORKSITE, KELANA JAYA,
 PJ, NOVEMBER 2011. The roadmap
 for construction is already drawn in
 the national agenda, and promises
 opportunities aplenty.

For the local construction industry, the next 10 years hold the promise of opportunities in abundance.

This is so because the Malaysian economy is now standing at the threshold of great change as it embarks on a 10-year journey to transform itself into an industrialised and high-income nation by 2020.

The initial steps have been taken, and the roadmap drawn up.

In 2010, three major development blueprints that underpin Malaysia's New Economic Model have been unveiled – the Government Transformation Programme (GTP), the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) and the five-year Tenth Malaysia Plan (10MP).

The construction sector is slated to play a key role in driving through the country's metamorphosis – economic advancement cannot take place without infrastructural development.

It is projected between 2011 and 2015, the industry will expand at an annual rate 3.7%, compared with 6% by the economy.

For construction companies like WCT, economic transformation and a strong growth rate equal opportunities.

Over the next five years, under the 10MP, some 60% of the RM230 billion allocated for development expenditure will be channeled towards physical

development, which will be undertaken by the construction sector.

In this regard, the government has announced 52 high-impact projects that include tolled highways and property development worth some RM63 billion, to be implemented under the private-public partnership initiative.

To provide an enabling environment, five strategic initiatives will be put in place. These are:

- revision and establishment of construction industry related acts;
- enhancement of processes and technology;
- leveraging on ICT;
- improving enforcement and monitoring; and
- strengthening the skills of the workforce involved in the industry to increase expertise and professionalism.

Under the ETP, which is the roadmap towards the 2020 goal, some 131 entry point projects in 12 national key economic areas (NKEAs) involving investments of some RM1.4 trillion have been identified.

These include the development of Greater KL – transforming Kuala Lumpur into a world class city in tandem with the country's economy. Projects that involve the construction and improvement of rail links, ports and airports have also been identified under the ETP to facilitate growth.

The road ahead is an exciting one. In keeping with this growth momentum, construction companies must gear up for change in the playing field, constantly improving themselves and staying relevant as competition heats up and technology becomes pivotal •

THE WCT STORY...

GOING FORWARD

WCT WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD ITS STRENGTH

IN THREE CORE SEGMENTS – CONSTRUCTION,

PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT AND ASSETS

INVESTMENT AND MANAGEMENT –

GIVING EACH EQUAL EMPHASIS.

The company's vision is to become the preferred global brand in all three areas, while at the same time strengthening its competitive advantages and deepening its corporate culture of teamwork, commitment and efficiency.

Given the changing landscape and the growing competition, the way forward will not be easy. But then, WCT and adversity are no longer strangers – experience has given the company its winning formula of grit, determination, humility and thrift.

In construction, WCT intends to expand its global presence while at the same time, entrenching itself as a key player in the domestic market.

Overseas, it has identified the Gulf States, Vietnam and North Africa as growth markets, where it can leverage on its strong track record of having built several award winning iconic projects and an experienced and dedicated team. Strategic alliances and partnerships will also be part of its growth strategy.

Given that it has laid a strong foundation in property development,

Opposite page: WORKSITE OF THE PARADIGM PROJECT IN KELANA JAYA, PJ, NOVEMBER 2011. Engineers engage state-of-the-art construction technology in laying the building foundations taking place in the midst of an existing developed township.

especially in integrated township development, the focus is to extend its profile in this niche area, and this is not necessarily confined to local shores.

To provide a steady stream of recurring income, focus will remain on asset investments and management. Apart from the Bukit Tinggi Shopping Centre in Klang, plans are in the pipeline to add more assets into its portfolio. These include the Kelana Jaya Paradigm project, a mixed commercial development that includes the construction of the Paradigm Shopping Mall.

Yet, visions and missions are only as good as their implementation. In this regard, ensuring that strong leadership in the long term is key.

MD Peter Taing, 57, says that to ensure continuity in the management of the company, a current priority is given to succession planning. "When we retire or step down, we cannot leave a ship without a captain to do the job, if the company is to continue to grow."

Towards this end, WCT has already put in place its own succession plans, where a group of younger executives have been rising up the ranks and now head the various key departments. Several of these key personnel have been with the company for more than 20 years •



A TRAVELLER'S TALE

DATO' CAPT. AHMAD SUFIAN

WHEN DATO' CAPT. AHMAD SUFIAN TOOK OVER AS CHAIRMAN OF WCT IN 1996, HE DISCOVERED A CORE MANAGEMENT TEAM WHO WERE DEDICATED, HARDWORKING AND SINCERE IN WANTING WHAT WAS BEST FOR ALL SHAREHOLDERS.

The one thing that he noticed when he came on the board was that everyone in the company worked very hard.

"The top management hardly took time off, although they were not as highly paid compared to those in other companies, and there were hardly any big perks for them," he notes.

But what impressed him most was the sincerity and dedication of the core team, not only in their efforts to create value in the company but also ensuring that all shareholders were rewarded when the company prospered.

"What I remember most is the statement that management made, when I suggested more perks for them. They said that they should be working hard, and that whatever excess cash the company had should be given back to the shareholders ... it was coming from the heart. I have not seen this commitment anywhere else in the companies that I have worked with."

For Dato' Sufian, his 15-year journey has been one steep learning curve and an enriching experience. When



THE ONE THING THAT HE NOTICED WHEN HE CAME ON THE BOARD WAS THAT **EVERYONE** IN THE COMPANY **WORKED** VERY HARD.

he started his stint on Aug 12, 1996, he confessed to knowing little about construction. He was, after all, a shipping man.

“Today although I cannot say that I am a 100% construction person, I can profess that with my team, we have contributed to the step-by-step success of WCT.”

Certainly, Dato’ Sufian has seen the company grow from a small player that nobody knew to one of the three largest construction companies in the industry. The corporation’s earnings growth over the years is testament to how it has quietly chipped a place for itself in the sector.

“When I joined in 1996, WCT’s revenue was just around RM200 million, and profit was RM12 million. Last year, in 2009, our profit after tax crossed RM200 million to RM216 million, and revenue was RM4.67 billion.”

He believes that one of the strengths of WCT is the fact that staff turnover in key management positions is

very low. “The core management team, for example, has stayed for years, so there is continuity.”

Why do people stay with the company that is not among the top paymasters in the industry? “There must be other reasons why people stay ... the company takes care of its people in other ways, like through the employees share options scheme (ESOS) that gives them a sense of belonging” according to Dato’ Sufian.

He notes that the success of WCT is also pinned on its ability to deliver quality, and on time. “Even when payment was an issue, WCT ensured that projects were completed on time.”

The fact that WCT started as an underdog in an industry where some of other bigger companies had better connections, is also a reason for the company’s strength and resilience today. “When you are small and unknown, you have to fight harder for everything, and in this way, WCT honed its ability to compete,” says Dato’ Sufian •

THE WCT STORY... THE ROAD AHEAD

AFTER 30 YEARS IN THE EARTHWORKS AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, WCT NOW STANDS TALL IN THE COMPANY OF GIANTS.

THE 30TH MILESTONE GLEAMS BRIGHT AND HEARTENING, NOT MARKING THE END OF THE JOURNEY BUT POINTING TO MORE EXCITING TIMES AHEAD. INDEED, OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND AS MALAYSIA EMBARKS ON ITS OWN JOURNEY OF ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION TO BECOME A HIGH-INCOME NATION OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS.

NOW AS BEFORE, THERE IS STILL THE NEED FOR THE COMPANY TO BE RELEVANT AND TO DELIVER THE BEST OF ITS EXPERTISE AND PRODUCTS.

THE WAY FORWARD WILL NOT BE EASY – THE GOAL POST HAS MOVED FURTHER AND THE BAR CLIMBED HIGHER. HOWEVER, WHAT HAS REMAINED UNCHANGED FOR THE COMPANY IS FORGING NEW PATHS AND MEETING NEW

CHALLENGES. WCT HAS DEMONSTRATED OVER THE LAST 30 YEARS, AN AMAZING AGILITY AND TENACITY WHEN IT COMES TO BEATING THE ODDS.

EVEN AS A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS, THE COMPANY ASSURES ITSELF OF ONE THING – IT HAS WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN. IT HAS DONE IT BEFORE IN LESS FRIENDLY ENVIRONS AND AMID GREATER CHALLENGES, AND IT CAN DO IT AGAIN.

AT WCT, LEADERSHIP IS HELMING THE COMPANY SHIP IN THE BEST TRADITION OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE CREW. THE WORKFORCE RESONATES WITH DEDICATION AND LOYALTY IN A CULTURE FORGED BY THE STRETCH AND PULL OF HARDSHIP.

THE COMPANY KNOWS TO PRESS ON WITH THE SAME INTENT AND PASSION THAT HAS SUSTAINED IT OVER THE YEARS – TO THINK INNOVATION AND BUILD WITH FOCUS. HOW BETTER TO MAKE TRUE MD PETER TAING’S CATCHPHRASE, “WHATEVER IS CONSTRUCTABLE, IS DOABLE”?

WITH EYES TRAINED ON THE SKYLINE, WCT MUST AND WILL DELIVER ON ITS UNDERTAKINGS. AND SO, FOR THE COMPANY ON THIS EVE OF ITS 30TH YEAR CELEBRATIONS, THE ROAD IN FRONT IS ONCE AGAIN PACKED FULL OF POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES •





THE WCT STORY...

TURNING POINTS

With profound gratitude, WCT reminds itself, and those who peruse these pages, of the turning points in its history over its 30 years of existence.

- SELANGOR TURF CLUB
First major infrastructural project

Following pages:

- KUALA LUMPUR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (KLIA)
Bulk earthworks project that was successfully completed in 1996, excavating more than 50 million cubic meters of earth
- SEPANG F1 CIRCUIT
Award-winning project that preceded two other international circuits, in Bahrain and Abu Dhabi, placing it as the only company in the world to have built, and won awards, for three modern era international F1 circuits
- TRACTORS MALAYSIA
Forerunner of the building constructions that are now pivotal to its future plans
- BANDAR BUKIT TINGGI
14 years in township development paving the way into other areas of growth, namely assets investment and management.





