

Staying ahead of the curve

By Chelsea J Lim / The Edge Malaysia

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With its modest appearance among other tall buildings in the heart of the city centre, the 29-storey GTower, which sits at the intersection of Jalan Tun Razak and Jalan Ampang, looks rather unassuming at first glance. Nevertheless, it holds the distinction of being one of Kuala Lumpur's first office towers to be purposefully built as a green building from the outset.

Completed in 2009 by IGB Bhd (KL:IGBB), GTower was Malaysia's first BCA Green Mark building when it obtained the Gold Full Certification in 2010. The Green Mark is a green building certification established by Singapore's Building and Construction Authority (BCA) in 2006.

"GTower is one of the landmark commercial buildings in Kuala Lumpur. Even when it was completed in 2009, it already resonated with many developers because of the sustainable design mindset," says IGB Commercial Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) (KL:IGBCR) joint deputy CEO and IGB Property Management Sdn Bhd CEO Irene Sin.

"It became a statement piece in the commercial property landscape as it incorporated design elements that were relatively new in the market at the time. Nobody was talking about ESG (environmental, social and governance) back then, so it was quite unique for IGB to introduce that kind of thinking where it incorporated many green elements and opened up opportunities to move into the green space."

That same forward-thinking mindset continues to shape the management's decision-making process to this day.



GTower is one of the first green office buildings in the country when it was completed in 2009

In 2020, GTower underwent a transformation project with the goal of staying on top amid the continuously evolving and competitive Kuala Lumpur office market.

The project involved converting its hotel component from Level 11 to 13 into office spaces during the Conditional Movement Control Order at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sin reveals that the management initially had no intention of converting the hotel space into offices. However, it felt necessary to undertake the reinvention when the hospitality industry was crippled by the economic downturn.

"In 2020, when the pandemic hit, we experienced quite a disruption. Things were quiet at that point. What we did differently was respond to the market once it started to recover. We also took the time to rethink the concept of our space," she says.



Sin (third from left) with (from left) The Edge Malaysia editor emeritus and the awards' chief judge Au Foong Yee, The Edge Malaysia editor-in-chief Kathy Fong, Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming, The Edge Media Group publisher and group CEO Datuk Ho Kay Tat and City & Country senior editor E Jacqui Chan

“We decided to convert a few hotel floors in our tower into an office space because we believed that the office market would recover faster than the hotel sector, which was still slow due to limited travel into Malaysia and the prolonged impact on tourism. With that well-thought-out process, the space was converted into office spaces, which allowed us to market and lease them out quickly.”

The transformation project, which started in 2020, was completed in 2021. During this period, GTower was injected into IGB Commercial REIT.

Today, GTower has a gross floor area of 1.21 million sq ft and a net lettable area of 736,996 sq ft. It has ample facilities and amenities for the benefit of its tenants and visitors. These include a gymnasium, along with physiotherapy providers, as well as an outdoor event area on Level 7, function rooms on the mezzanine floor and a food hall that provides affordably priced meals on the lower ground floor.

There are also a variety of dining experiences such as Coffea Coffee and Michelin-selected 2025 restaurant BarKar on the ground floor and a halal Japanese buffet restaurant Wanomiya at the sky bar on Level 29. Other amenities include a beauty salon, mailbox service outlets and a convenience store.



Sin: We continue to push ourselves as a commercial space, despite being in a tough location. What sets us apart is that we truly understand

“These amenities are seamlessly integrated into the building’s design, enhancing the overall experience for tenants and visitors alike and making GTower a self-contained and attractive destination,” says Sin.

GTower was awarded Gold winner at The Edge Malaysia Best Managed & Sustainable Property Awards 2025 in the 10 Years and Above — Non-strata Office category. It also earned the Editor’s Choice award for Excellence in Agile Reinvention.

Managing expectations

GTower is currently over 90% occupied, housing more than 100 companies from various sectors. Its tenant profile includes those in the oil and gas, technology, education and communications industries.

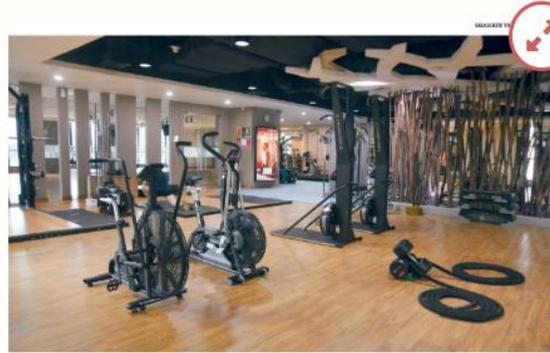
With a variety of tenants that have different needs and demands, managing expectations can be challenging. “Managing different stakeholders is a key part of how we evaluate our operations, especially because GTower has a unique proposition. We have a diverse mix of stakeholders from very different markets. It’s not just office employees. We also have tenants from retail and F&B, as well as members of the public coming into the building. All of them need to be managed appropriately,” says Sin.

“My team has been very much on the ground, listening, being attentive and ensuring every need is met. Even our service staff, including housekeeping, must be clear that they need to be ready and on standby for any specific requirements.”

The tower has a working population of 9,000 and a significant amount of daily footfall of about 3,000 visitors. With a diverse and high-volume tenant base as well as visitors, safety is critical.



Visitors to GTower are welcomed with the aroma of coffee from Coffea Coffee, situated at the entrance of the lobby



A gymnasium on Level 7 to encourage an active lifestyle

“We definitely have a clear standard operating procedure — our emergency response plan. We have constant engagement and education with our tenants on safety. Our Centre of Excellence (COE) safety team is very active. We regularly conduct drills and simulations to prepare our team for potential incidents. The flow of engagements is [constant] from tenants to our teams [so that everyone is aware],” says Sin.

The COE oversees all properties under IGB Commercial REIT and implements best practices to ensure consistent quality across the portfolio. One key role it plays is the COE’s safety, health and security department where it monitors safety and security protocols across all properties.

In the case of GTower, simulations are run periodically to test how quickly and effectively the management team responds during a crisis or emergency while tenants are given training and education on what to do during drills, how to use automated external defibrillators or how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Quick facts	
NAME	GTower
DEVELOPER	Goldis Bhd (now known as IGB Bhd)
OWNER	MTrustee Bhd (trustee for IGB Commercial REIT)
DEVELOPMENT TYPE	Office
LAND AREA	1.81 acres
TENURE	Freehold
COMPLETION	2009
STOREYS	32-storey office building with 2 basement car parks
NET LETTABLE AREA	736,996 sq ft
GROSS FLOOR AREA	1.21 million sq ft
MAINTENANCE FEE	Per sq ft: RM2.50
AVERAGE OCCUPANCY RATE	92.78%
CAR PARK BAYS	1,035
AMENITIES	The LINC KL, Intermark Mall, Avenue K Shopping Mall, Suria KLCC, Prince Court Medical Centre, Ampang Park LRT and MRT interchange stations
FACILITIES	F&B outlets, rooftop bar, gymnasium
ENERGY-SAVING FEATURES	High-efficient chillers, variable speed drives to reduce energy consumption, energy-efficient LED lighting, motion sensor lighting, low-E laminated glass panels, double-glazed windows, building management system to optimise energy consumption and rainwater harvesting system
INDOOR AIR QUALITY FEATURES	Safe level of indoor air quality with Air Handling Unit coil cleaning, microorganism filter treatment, and installation of UVC lights

Sin notes that these efforts are an ongoing learning process for everyone in GTower due to the constant change in demographics among tenants.

“Every year, you have turnover where people leave and new people come in. With that, you need continuous similar engagements on an annual basis. The steps are taken at a constructive level with [consistent communication], safety bulletins and alerts. It shows that we want everyone to be actively involved in the process,” she says.

Asset enhancement initiatives

As GTower is more 15 years old, asset enhancement initiatives (AEI) are an essential part of its long-term asset value plan.

This tenant-centric approach has guided a series of major AEI in recent years. Some of the initiatives include replacing old fittings with energy-efficient ones, upgrading and installing new lifts, and modernising the look of the tower.

“In 2022, we installed five new lifts and upgraded the building automation system to improve energy efficiency and operational control. In 2023, we replaced all fluorescent lights in the lift lobbies with energy-efficient LED downlights, completed the installation of high-speed lifts to reduce wait times, upgraded our chiller system and improved cooling tower performance,” says Sin.

“By 2024, our focus shifted to value-added enhancements such as refreshing the green walls [on our façade], upgrading landscape lighting, piloting a food composting machine and trialling robotic cleaners. Additionally, we developed 52,000 sq ft of fully fitted office space with an additional 15,000 sq ft that are currently in progress to meet the demand for flexible, move-in-ready workspaces.”

This year, the management team is focusing on architectural enhancements such as constructing a new staircase to connect the ground floor and the mezzanine floor, upgrading the function rooms on the mezzanine floor and continuing its energy-optimisation initiative by replacing the remaining neon lighting with high-efficiency LED lighting. These works are expected to be completed by year end.

Additionally, it is expanding the use of robotic cleaners and digitalising key internal processes such as account and facilities management to further streamline operations.

Maintaining its competitive advantages

Sin says IGB Commercial REIT continues to look for ways to make sure GTower continues to stay relevant in the market, reinventing itself from a traditional office space to an office space that meets the demands of today.

“We continue to push ourselves as a commercial space, despite being in a tough location. What sets us apart is that we truly understand our product. We know what we are doing and what is required from us to provide this space. We want to provide a space that is safe for [our tenants] to work and also a space for them to enjoy. We want to create a purposeful environment that is meaningful to both the current tenants and newcomers.

“We are also reinventing ourselves and changing the different mix of space usage, from gym, commercial space and event space to now introducing a new vibe with a co-working space. Constant upgrades will be required and our AEI will take shape in different areas. However, we are careful on what’s required [to enhance] before we embark on that journey. But if we want to do [AEI], we can do it very fast. We don’t make changes just to follow trends. Instead, it’s about making sustainable changes that prepare us for the next expected stage of the market.”

Another key part of its strategy to remain competitive is to provide quality service. Sin says, “Besides modernisation and upgrades, one key focus for us is service quality. We have a brand promise — ‘Your Business, Our Priority’ — and this has resonated so much with our team that we want to deliver quality services to our stakeholders. In this competitive market, we are aware that we are one of the older buildings in this environment. The differentiating factor is how our team is able to leverage years of experience to manage the expectations of our stakeholders.”

She adds that tenant satisfaction and loyalty remain a strong reflection of IGB Commercial REIT’s long-term commitment to quality and consistency, and that reflects in the confidence shown by its tenants.

“From the team perspective, we have to work together to win together. That has been the mantra. I strongly believe that collective teamwork is what sustains our momentum on a year-to-year basis ... We have been very positive on our tenant renewals. A lot of our tenants are expanding their spaces, which is a testament to the management of the property and their confidence in our ability to deliver their expectations.”