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# Zaharuddin sets his sights beyond the ordinary

THP's solid foundation will serve as launch-pad for greater things, says new chief



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Bandar Enstek is conceptualised to be a knowledge-based community within a high-tech, but healthy and green environment.

**W**hen Zaharuddin Saidon took over the helm of TH Properties Sdn Bhd (THP) earlier this year, he didn't just take the reigns of a development company. He assumed the driver's seat of one of the country's largest, most ambitious ventures.

The futuristic RM9.2 billion Bandar Enstek in Negri Sembilan is more than "just" a township providing houses, commercial units and industrial premises in an emerging part of the Klang Valley near the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA). If that was its main mission, it would most likely have lived up to the task years ago – and then become another forgettable development

blended into the landscape.

But Bandar Enstek was not conceptualised to be "ordinary". Its 5,116 acres were meant to stand out and cradle a knowledge-based community within a green, healthy and high-tech environment boasting unique real estate assets.

The new chief executive's stewardship of THP comes at a time when things are really heating up and Bandar Enstek begins delivering on its promises.

Dubbed the "prime suburb of KLIA", 1,117 residential units have so far been completed to accommodate a population of 3,500, with the launched phases generating RM288 million in sales, while land sales have raked in RM360 million. Components such as its

technology park are also inviting over RM500 million in domestic and foreign investments.

There's still a long way to go, though, and Zaharuddin knows this: Ultimately, Bandar Enstek is meant to accommodate over 35,000 people, with a third of them calling it home over the next five to seven years.

He admits the job at hand is "massive" and undeniably "the biggest thing" he's ever done. However, he's confident of meeting the challenge with "just a few changes and some minor tweaks" to the company that was previously run by Datuk Syed Mohamed Syed Ibrahim, who left in March to helm the development of the Madinah Knowledge Economic City in Saudi Arabia.

"The company's foundation is strong and we're heading in the right direction, thanks to the good leadership of the past few years ... it's my job now to ensure we stay on course and build the momentum to advance towards bigger and better things," said Zaharuddin in an interview.

Of course, he should know every nut and bolt in the company - he is, after all, one of its founding members and has spent the past decade working in various positions.

A civil engineer by training, Zaharuddin joined THP in 1997 as a senior project manager after working for corporations such as Shell Malaysia Trading, Shell Marketing Company of Borneo and SPPK Sdn Bhd.

Just before his rise to the CEO office, his last position as general manager of solutions creations put him up close and personal with Bandar Enstek's masterplan, which gave rise to the company's "solution-centric" identity.

"I see THP not merely as a developer but a lifestyle solutions provider," said Zaharuddin.

"It's like form following function: The physical aspects, infrastructure and technology we will develop are the conscious result of the lifestyle we want the population to have.

"I'll ensure the company continues to build on this principle."

Among the minor tweaks Zaharuddin said he will be introducing are those that will make his management style more effective. Being a hands-on type of guy, he said he will "be spending a lot of time with staff members as they go about their daily routine".

"It's not to be over-bearing ... but to extract the fullest potential out of them - to motivate them beyond their own expectations.

"Mind mapping and Blue Ocean Strategies ... these approaches suit me as fresh ideas are important.

"That's why I want to encourage more group discussions ... to tap into the talent pool inside THP."

He will also be fine-tuning the organisational structure to make management "more horizontal" and the com-

pany "more agile", as well as conducting more training courses to develop staff members into leaders.

On the company's business direction, he said its main focus will continue to be Bandar Enstek, though "undertaking other projects will also be considered".

"We have people constantly knocking on our doors ... one was from a Saudi Arabian firm inviting us to build a high-tech township similar to Bandar Enstek in the Middle East.

"However, we want to complete our flagship venture in Negri Sembilan first because we know its success will justify our purpose and define us as a solutions provider ... only then can we use it as a launch-pad for similar knowledge-based communities around the country and beyond."

Bandar Enstek, he said, is "at a critical juncture now". Among the components underway are the 500-acre KL Education City, a 65-acre commercial hub called Bizpark@enstek, 784 acres

dedicated to advanced manufacturing and biotechnology industries, as well as almost 2,000 acres for residential properties, of which two phases have been completed.

Also in the pipeline is a 528-acre medical hub called medicalcity@enstek, which will contain the whole value chain of medical services and healthcare industry products.

Looking to the future, Zaharuddin said THP has ambitions to increase its landbank, especially if opportunities present themselves within KL's Golden Triangle and in Johor's growth corridor.

"Overall, I'd say we are a company that's 'getting there' ... we aim to be a major player in the property market in the next five years.

"I'm sure we'll reach this goal, because we have a young and dynamic team in place that's capable of achieving it."

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## International appeal for Enstek

**B**andar Enstek is proving that appealing concepts will draw investments into the country.

To date, the RM9.2 billion township has attracted over RM500 million worth of investments with its 524-acre techpark@enstek - a state-of-the-art industrial hub for high-tech and biotechnology industries.

Recently, its developer TH Properties Sdn Bhd (THP) and Italian industrial design firm Villa Muhandis Internazionale signed a Memorandum of Understanding to set up a Design Business Centre at the techpark to help develop and commercialise Malaysian designs for local and international markets.

THP chief executive officer Zaharuddin Saidon said apart from setting up the centre, the Italian firm would also be collaborating with housing research centres to improve building methods.

"One of the main areas is research into industrialised building systems, which would help enhance quality and

safety at construction sites, as well as reduce costs," he said, adding that discussions on collaborations have been initiated with the Housing Research Centre of Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Tun Hussein Onn.

Zaharuddin said through the tie-up with Villa Muhandis, Bandar Enstek's future phases would also be designed with Italian flair and building concepts.

Other foreign ventures in the works are a proposed joint venture with a leading Indian developer and the proposed acquisition of 200 acres by a United States-based multinational company.

Big names that have set up shop at Bandar Enstek, expected to be fully completed by 2025, include Stevia Biotechnology, Bio Streptz, Biomolecular Industries, Renal Laboratories, Felda Biotechnology, Eden Enterprises as well as the Ministry of Health's National Institution of Natural Products, Vaccines and Biologics.