

Injecting ideas into living space

BY REBECCA RAJAENDRAM
educate@thestar.com.my

LOW cost housing does not have to mean living in a boring, generic match-box-sized flat that does little to encourage communal and green living.

That was the message and the challenge presented to the participants of the PAM-Lafarge Architecture Student Competition 2013 organised by the Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM) and Lafarge Malaysia Berhad.

PAM president and competition judge Chan Seong Aun said he was impressed with the way the winning entries incorporated the design criteria innovatively into their work without compromising on the aesthetics of the building.

Limkokwing University of Creative Technology student Choong Wei Li, 28, was crowned champion with his winning idea dubbed "The 55.5% concept".

"My idea is you build only 55.5% of the maximum size of the home. You add on to 100% as the years go by and you can expand your home," he said.

"Basically, you buy what you can afford first."

Wei Li went on to explain that

a bachelor who is planning on purchasing his first home would look for something affordable and probably with just one room.

"As the years go by, he gets married and has children. Then, he can expand his unit by adding on more rooms," he said.

Wei Li envisioned his housing project in Jelatek, Kuala Lumpur, and carried out site visits to determine what the residents wanted.

He said his design gave homeowners the flexibility to expand without creating nooks and crannies that were an eyesore.

Second place went to the team from UCSI University with their idea "neuhaus".

Wan Mei Zhen, Lee Bin Li, Alian Chan Yin Vui, Tan Boon Kuan and Niragira Lysette impressed the judges with their idea of a unit that can be expanded by adding on vertical precast panels and cubes in a linear fashion.

The walls of the unit are interchangeable panels that can be switched anytime, said Mei Zhen, explaining that there were seven

basic panel designs to choose from, some with windows and

another with a solar panel.

Panels or walls can be transported to the upper floors via a central core lift meant especially for these panels.

Besides solar panning to help generate power, "neuhaus" also features a rainwater harvesting system.

Mei Zhen emphasised that their design incorporates landscaped communal areas that allow residents to interact with each other.

She said the narrow walkways seen in flats are not conducive to forming neighbourly bonds.

But it wasn't just the idea of expanding spaces that captured the judges' attention.

Urban agriculture and an unconventional layout proved to be the winning formula for third prize winner Ang Zhi Ming, 23, from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

The Muar native got his inspiration from his childhood home where his grandfather and mother kept a garden with fruit trees.

"If I wanted guava, I could just go to the back of my house and pluck some," said Zhi Ming.

He also said the longhouses in

Sarawak were a great source of inspiration that led him to think about getting everyone involved in the community they lived in.

The courtyard in his design has designated spaces for planting produce which can be shared amongst the residents.

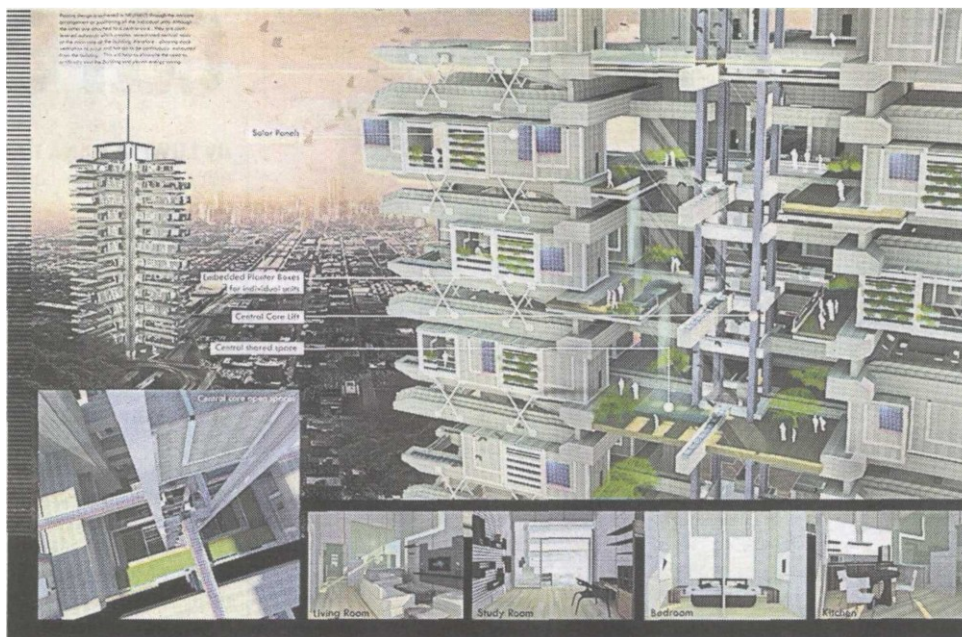
Lafarge Malaysia Bhd president, chief executive officer and fellow judge Bradley Mulroney said the term affordability, a major theme of the competition, is a relative concept that affects the whole world and not just Malaysia.

"It's (affordable housing) to ensure that people can have a decent, high-quality home but also relevant to their means and their situation," he said.

Launched in September 2013 and opened to aspiring Malaysian architects who are PAM student members both locally and abroad, the competition challenged students to come up with innovative and sustainable designs that take advantage of thermal cooling effects, promotes energy efficiency and sustainability as well as provide for quality communal living.



Taking centrestage: (from left) Mulroney, Limkokwing University of Creative Technology programme leader Sharonee Sidek, Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan, Wei Li and Chan.



Wow factor:
 The winning design from UCSI University that took second place in the competition.