

Bina Puri taps hill attractions

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BENTONG is both a town and district in Pahang. It covers 183,112 hectares of area, but most of the land is hilly and suitable for hospitality property development, such as resorts and villas.

The distance from Kuala Lumpur to Bentong town via Karak Highway and Kuala Kubu is 75km, or about an hour and 10 minutes of drive.

Bentong is a popular industrial area and is home to many light and medium-sized industries, such as sawmills, food manufacturing and electrical component collection factories.

An increase in urban development has enlightened the Bentong Municipal Council towards transforming the town into a developed, prosperous and tranquil urban area.

In the last five years, the quaint town has been gaining interest from developers. There are a number of development projects, which have started or are in the pipeline, leading to the town centre of Bentong.

Besides Bentong town, there are several other areas that have become attractive to developers, such as Karak, Bukit Tinggi, Simpang Telemong and Pelangai.

One of the biggest developers in Bentong currently is Bina Puri Holdings Bhd. The construction and property firm had in 2014 acquired 1,600 acres of agriculture land for RM47.5 million as an investment, or less than RM30,000 an acre.

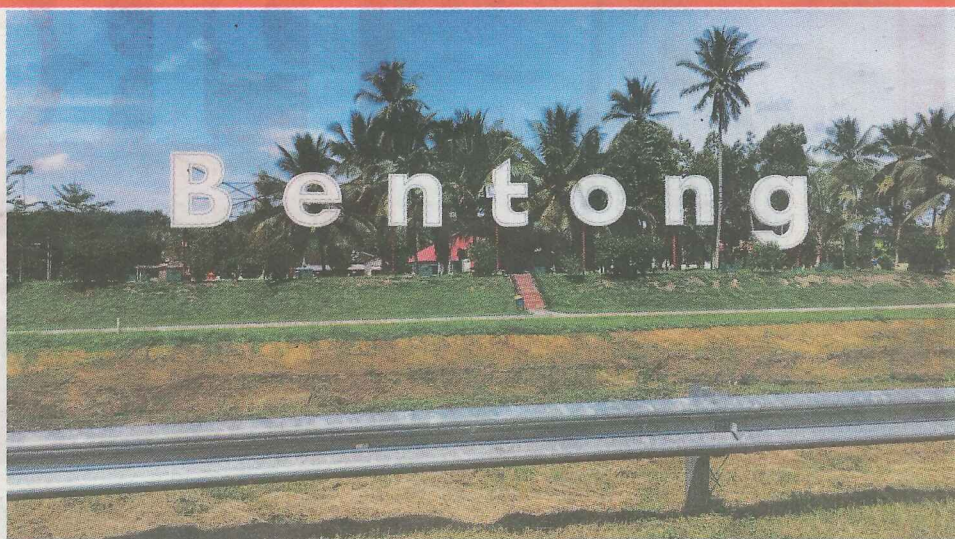
The land is located just a short 7km away from Karak Town and the exit to the Karak Expressway, which connects Kuantan and Kuala Lumpur.

Bina Puri has started a project called the Valley, which is estimated to have a gross development value (GDV) of RM279 million.

Two years after Bina Puri bought the land, Global Oriental Bhd acquired 113.26ha of freehold land for RM170.67 million as it saw the potential for "resort-like residential and commercial development". The purchase consideration is based on the selling price of RM14 per sq ft.

In the same year, Golden Frieden Develop-

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ment Sdn Bhd launched its maiden commercial project, One Bentong, on a 4.3-acre tract along Jalan Bentong-Raub. The project comprises 39 units of two- and three-storey shop offices and were priced from RM859,000.

With big names in Bentong, optical disk maker GSB Group Bhd, which has an ongoing development there known as Taman Bentong Makmur, decided to buy more land. GSB acquired 21.08ha to undertake a mixed development with a GDV of RM374.8 million.

THE VALLEY

The Valley by Bina Puri is nestled in a prime location between tourist hotspots, such as Genting Highlands and Berjaya Hills in Bukit Tinggi.

The 647.5ha project is divided into several development zones with 243ha allocated for homesteads (land or homes meant for weekend retreat or within a resort scheme).

"We have 1,200 acres (486ha) of freehold land, and 400 acres (162ha), which is leasehold. The leasehold land has recently been sold to a private investment group for agricultural activities. For the freehold status land, besides the 600 acres (243ha) allocated for homesteads, Bina Puri has taken up 230 acres (93ha) to plant durian trees. The remaining land we are looking at selling," said Bina Puri Properties chief operating officer Lee Tong Leong.

The homesteads are known as the "Kerau", which is after the river that meanders through the entire project.

Lee said the project would provide the residents with facilities and an access to a landscaped grass lawn courtyard for breathtaking views of the valley.

Lee said the homesteads are divided into two phases. Phase 1 comprises 158 homestead lots (each lot is one acre or slightly more) and 80 per cent has been sold. Phase 2 has 128 homestead lots and about 40 per cent has been sold.

Phase 1 sold at between RM5 and RM6.50 per square feet (psf) while Phase 2 is selling from RM7.30 to RM8.20 psf, said Lee, adding that prices for the remaining lots would increase next year because of infrastructure development.

"The Valley project comes complete with water supply and electricity. That is the infrastructure that we are providing, including landscaping at common areas, and security to both entrances.

"We have also crafted the existing streams into natural water course and retention ponds cascading naturally through the project. For Phase 2 and the naturally elevated ground, two new courtesy ponds with natural water source will be provided for the adjacent land owner to draw the water.

"The hilly and curving slopes are most suitable for fruit orchards such as durian, as proven by the vast number of durian orchards that you see here," Lee told NST Property during a site visit.

Lee said majority of the investors bought between one and five areas of the homestead lots to build either a small retirement village and to lease it out, or a house with plantation for themselves.

He said the Valley clubhouse is under construction and would serve the residents when it is fully completed by early next year. The clubhouse will provide resort living facilities, with a swimming pool, gymnasium, lounge, outdoor barbecue pits, exhibition spaces and meeting rooms.

"There are a lot of resort and recreational activities in Bentong. More and more people are coming to Bentong and looking for a place to build a holiday home. At the Valley, we are not selling bare land, but developing the infrastructure and landscape, and building a clubhouse to provide convenience for the owners. The minute you buy a homestead lot, you can take over the site immediately and start planting or constructing your home," said Lee.



The Valley project comes complete with security, water supply, electricity, roads and landscaping at common areas.