



1 A scenic view of Medini. 2 An aerial view of Zone B. 3 The planned shopping mall in the Iskandar Financial District.

VENI, VIDI, MEDINI

Millennium Development International, which has reinvigorated the urban scene in the Middle East, now looks towards Medini in Iskandar Malaysia to bring the future one step closer.

Text Kenneth Tan Photo Danny Lee

An image of a future city is usually populated by dazzling buildings of white, wide spacious boulevards, shimmering surfaces of crystal clear waters and shady greenery without a single twig out of place. Of course, dreaming it is a far reality from the actuality of living in it, but the wheels are already in

motion as bricks and mortar begin to flesh out one of Malaysia's most modern urban development on its peninsula's southernmost tip – Medini, a core component of the Iskandar Development Region.

In the gargantuan master plan that is Iskandar Malaysia – an area three times the size of Singapore – the area that is

Medini will encompass 955 hectares. Of this, Global Capital and Development – a consortium of Middle Eastern investors (which the Malaysian government also has a stake in) – has entrusted 657 hectares to the development management of Millennium Development International (MDI), a Beirut-based company which has been extensively involved in building urban centres in the Middle East.

“Millennium Development International began 11 years ago in Beirut, its expertise grew out of rebuilding the city after the war ended. Then, the centre of Beirut was destroyed, there was no city and no money,” says MDI Country Manager for Malaysia, Richard Polkinghorne. “So they set up a corporation that had to find ways to rebuild a city which had to conform to high urban design standard and they made it into a people-oriented, walkable city, rebuilding many historic stone buildings as well. The experience really enriched the Lebanese and the people who were involved in the rebuilding took their expertise and formed design, development and contracting companies. One of them was Millennium, which began taking on projects in the Middle East, Kazakhstan and now, in Malaysia.”

Building a township isn't easy but,

according to Polkinghorne, Medini's progress – minus the blip of the global economic downturn last year – has been fairly smooth. “It's helped that we've worked really well with the government, and there's a real political will and desire to make this work,” he says, highlighting the extension of a coastal highway linking Medini with Johor Baru as one of the many examples of government support, ensuring connection between urban centres.

And while he concedes that MDI would have liked to be racing on with these projects six to eight months ago, Polkinghorne says the downturn is turning out to be a boon in presenting sales propositions today. “Rather than go into the market and selling land before you've finished the infrastructure, we can take a potential

investor to the site now and say, ‘That's your plot and, while the road's not finished, here's the layout of the road.’ And within 18 months, all roads, parks services, will be finished. So that makes it a better sales proposition for long term. You'll have finished your building with mains power, and all the infrastructure will be finished as well.”

Medini, expected to bring in a gross development value of USD20 billion (RM66 billion), will ultimately accommodate over 220,000 people comprising residents, workers and visitors, with many frequenting the lifestyle and leisure clusters of Zone A and Zone F, and, of course, pursuing gainful employment in the gilded Iskandar Financial District with its state-of-art offices and bustling commerce. Some of the projects on the MDI site which have broken ground include the