

A house built on smart ideas

Bungalow owner sells electricity to TNB generated from his rooftop solar panels

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WITH cool breeze blowing into his house which is also basking in ample natural light, retiree Tan Vait Leong does not need to switch on the lights or air conditioner during the day.

Even at noon, the 56-year-old's bungalow at Puncak Bukit Mutiara in Pearl Hill is still cool, thanks to the environmentally-friendly and open concept design of the house.

"The planning of the design of the house started five years ago, while construction of the property took three years to complete.

"I would draw up the designs and concepts for the house while I was at airports or in planes, as I travelled frequently for work.

"I enjoyed the process, as it was also an outlet for me to destress," said the former vice-president of a multinational company.

Having spent a substantial amount of time travelling, the father-of-four said it was only right that he designed his house ala-resort style so he would not "need to go for holidays anymore".

One of the special features of the house is the photovoltaic (PV) solar panel fixed on the roof, which Tan had obtained through the National Suria



No wastage: Tan looking at the filter tub with pandan plant to absorb nitrate from the water.

1000 programme to generate power from solar energy.

With that, his household is automatically enlisted under the newly launched feed-in-tariff (FIT) programme where Tenaga Nasional Bhd

will buy back power generated from the PV solar panel.

Currently, the PV electricity subsidised about 20% of the household's total electricity intake while Tan pays about RM700 monthly for his power bill.

"With the FIT, I might not have to fork out a single sen for my electricity bill," he said yesterday.

A tour around the handsome house with a built-up area of 8,000sq ft shows there are five spacious rooms, four bathrooms, an infinity pool with a view overlooking the sea which is also connected to the living room and master bedroom, an indoor fish pond, a kitchen, a family room, a study room, a living room, an outdoor deck as well as a cosy playroom for Tan's 10-year-old twin daughters.

Aptly named after Tan's wife, Foo Sin Gein, 54, he said his home Gein Villa was constructed to blend into existing green environment where the big trees around are spared from the axe.

"I don't spend money on landscaping. The trees shed leaves seasonally but it is part of the feature of the house. I don't understand the reasons behind cutting down trees if people want to build houses on the hillside.

"Well there are occasions where our 'special guests' — monkeys, squirrels and bats will pay a visit but we don't harm them as they are not aggressive, just playful," he said.

There are no excessive furniture in the house, with only the walnut and cherry flooring along with salvaged chengal wood which Tan used to lay the staircase and kitchen tabletop.

"I also use the hollow bricks that were left over from the construction as display shelves," he said.

"We water the plants with water from the fish pond, and we keep plants at the pool and the filter tub to absorb the nitrate."



Generating income: The solar photovoltaic panel atop the roof of Tan's bungalow.