

# Golfing in Bintan with a clean conscience

Gallant ropes in Spanish institute to develop Lagoi Bay as eco-tourism area

By JOYCE HOOI

[SINGAPORE] Gallant Venture, the investment holding firm behind Bintan Resorts International, will be engaging the help of Spain-based institute - Fundacion Metropoli - to develop the 1,300-ha Lagoi Bay area as a second-home playground for the region and an eco-tourism area.

Yesterday, Gallant Venture signed a strategic agreement of collaboration with Fundacion Metropoli at the Shangri-La Hotel. Coming onboard will be architect-planner Alfonso Vegara, the president of Fundacion Metropoli.

"Bintan could be a laboratory for innovations in eco-tourism," said Dr Vegara yesterday.

He added that Bintan is poised to benefit from its proximity to Singapore, because of the republic's airport, medical facilities and casinos.

that are usually not so close to traditional tourist destinations," he said. He also said that there is even a possibility that Bintan might come to be a medical centre for niche areas like physiotherapy in its own right.

Lagoi Bay currently has a 162-unit Pantai Indah residential project - with villas ranging from 400 square metres to 800 square metres in size - that has access to resorts and retail shops. A shopping mall is also currently under construction.

In keeping with the eco-friendly slant of the development, the masterplan for Lagoi Bay includes 100 ha of land set aside for forest preservation, on top of

space carved out for habitat preservation.

The masterplan also includes a 90-ha golf course and six ha of waterfront residential area.

Chia Tek Yew, Bintan Resorts International's executive director of strategy and marketing, was unable to say how much investment this development effort would require.

"What we are trying to do is create a vision," he said.

He pointed out, however, that land in Bintan is "plentiful and affordable".

Part of the agreement between Gallant Venture and Fundacion Metropoli will involve students from the University of Pennsylvania doing their masters thesis on the island of Bintan for a full year, starting from this month.

"By involving academic research in this manner, you're also helping to unlock ideas the way that universities and thinking outside of restrictions," said Mark Dwyer, director of the institute's cities lab and fellowship programme.

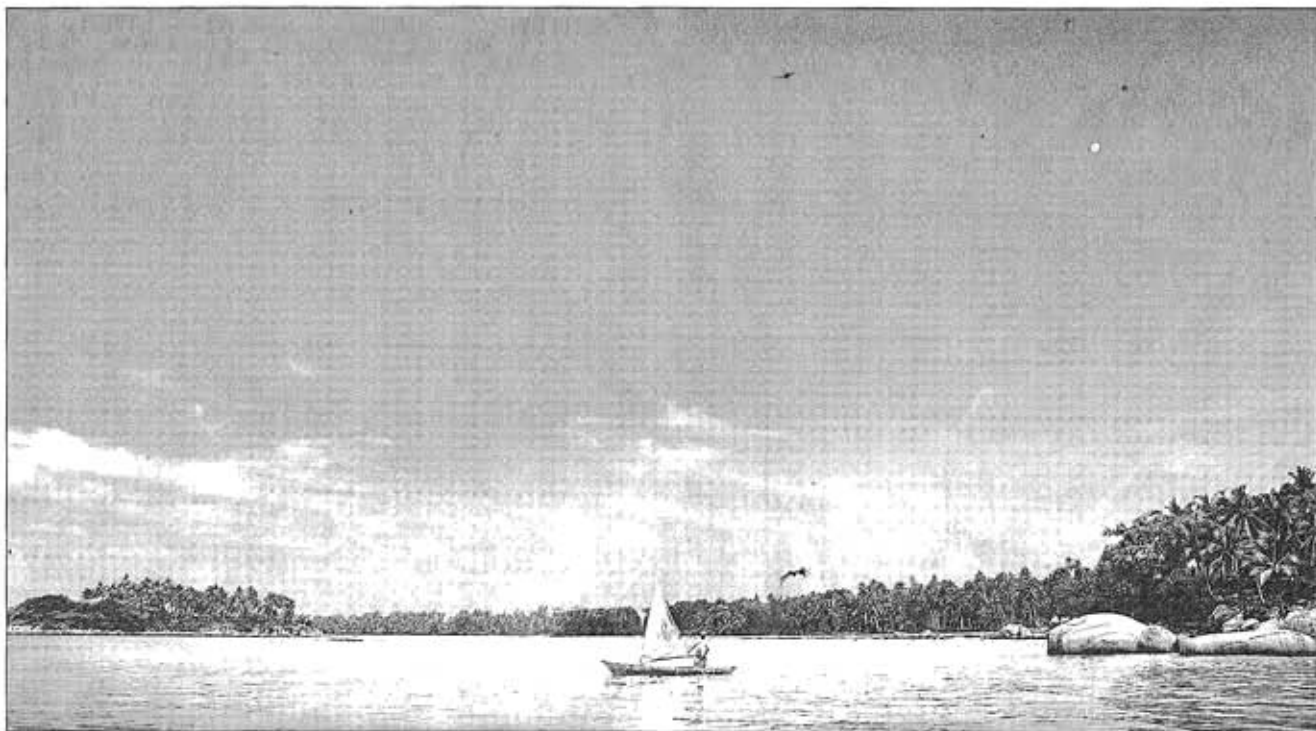
"It could help to develop new concepts about eco-tourism and clean energy and transportation systems on the island."

Presently, the land owned and developed by Bintan Resorts International stretches across the entire northern coast of the island of Bintan, and comes up to about 1/3 the land area of Singapore.

To that end, the previous experience of Fundacion Metropoli - which has a focus on sustainability and innovation in city-building - will come in handy.

"In Spain, we have been receiving people from the north of Europe, (who) have a second home in better weather and in a cheaper area," said Dr Vegara.

As it stands, the area un-



BINTAN RESORTS INTERNATIONAL

**Lagoi Bay:** The masterplan for the 1,300-ha plot includes 100 ha of land set aside for forest preservation, on top of space carved out for habitat preservation. It also includes a 90-ha golf course and six ha of waterfront residential area. The development boasts a water catchment area larger than MacRitchie Reservoir

der development practically functions as an outpost of Singapore's, with real estate being snapped up for its proximity to the republic.

According to Mr Chia, the Pantai Indah properties are aimed at residents of Singapore - in particular, expatriates who are based here.

"The idea is that over time, these second homes evolve to become first homes," he said.

Currently, about 10 per cent of the land owned by Bintan Resorts International has been developed and another 10 per cent is being developed by the company, he said.

The development also boasts a water catchment area larger than MacRitchie Reservoir, which supplies water to the residents and tourists.

According to Bintan Resorts International, the area under its development is the only place among the Indonesian islands where potable water is available.

The partnership with Fundacion Metropoli is hoped to bring about what it terms "creative tourism" - a brand of tourism that attracts creative people.

In drawing this type of people, the development will need to have in place an "urban intensity" and a diversity of people, according to Dr Vegara.

"Creative people are interested in human life, in human intensity and interaction. Creative people never go to a boring location," he said.