

# *The Road to* **EXCELLENCE**

Founded more than 20 years ago, engineering conglomerate Protasco has grown steadily through diversification of businesses and into a recognised Southeast Asian brand. As managing director, Kenny Chong has moved towards making Protasco into a one-stop shop for all things engineering, whilst navigating the modern challenges of digitisation and COVID-19.

**KENNY CHONG**

MANAGING DIRECTOR @ Protasco



**B**ased in Selangor, Malaysia, Protasco was founded by Kenny Chong's father, Ket Pen, in the late 1990s. Chong Sr. used his experience as a road engineer for the Malaysian public works department to establish his own private brand. Shortly after, Protasco secured its first big break, a government contracted road cement stabilisation job.

Since then, growth has been consistent for Protasco, which has established itself as one of Malaysia's premier construction companies. Their construction has contributed to the infrastructure development and nation-building of Malaysia, a nation on an upward trajectory much like Protasco. As the Malaysian economy and cities have grown, Protasco's expertise has seen the design, construction, and maintenance of roads, bridges, and buildings across the country, in total undertaking more than USD2 billion dollars' worth of construction and project works.

**A family tradition**

Owing to his familial ties, Kenny has been in and out of the company as an intern through much of his adult life. "I gained experience holding various positions on the way up," he says. "This gave me a holistic view of the company." Much like his father, following his studies in 2005, Kenny specialised as a senior pavement engineer. "Through this work, I was exposed to design and supervision works for road pavements and major freeways. Since re-joining Protasco, that experience has helped me understand the operational excellence needed to be successful in the construction industry," says Kenny.



**The pandemic forced us to focus on key business areas that have the most impact on the most people.**



Protasco's expansion and Kenny's career growth have gone hand in hand. Protasco, like Kenny, got its start in construction and began to expand to become a holding company operating in multiple segments, including engineering, education, property, and energy. So too has Kenny's career: Prior to his appointment as the group managing director of Protasco in January 2020, he had been the managing director for the Construction Division, Property Division, Trading & Manufacturing Division, Corporate Security, and The Sustainability Section.

**Curves in the road**

"Today," Kenny explains, "Protasco has seven core business areas, all of which are growing, with our road maintenance company now maintaining half of Malaysia's roadmap." However, it hasn't all been rosy. When Kenny took on the MD role, he says it was one of the toughest times for the company. "When COVID hit, a lot of the sectors slowed down and went through lockdown, and it was a challenge to adapt and work remotely... Since then we have had a full digi-



**Education keeps us focused on the community.**

talisation blueprint." Whilst a comparable test was faced by all businesses, it is certainly more challenging when your core offering requires boots on the ground. "We had to ensure strict [COVID] adherence at all construction sites and focus on our key projects, especially projects that had already begun," says Kenny. "Fortunately, many of our works were still able to go ahead. We hold a lot of government contracts, which enabled us to get their support to keep the economy going during lockdown."

Government contracts have long been a key to Protasco's consistency, and even

more so now post-pandemic, where they have been awarded two federal road maintenance agreements lasting through 2029. "We have focused on areas where governments would boost spending; certain projects are crisis-proof, such as road maintenance," Kenny explains. "The need to boost the economy helped maintain our projects, and the pandemic forced us to focus on key business areas that have the most impact on the most people."

**Enriching lives**

Protasco's desire to impact people comes through in both their mission statement to 'enrich people's lives and uplift communities through every industry that [we are] involved in', and in their focus on education services. In 2003, Protasco opened a university, IUKL, specialising in infrastructure training. In 2011, it was rated 'excellent' and today runs over 60 programs. Kenny is very proud of the impact IUKL continues to have. "Education is very important to my father and keeps us focused on the community." It has also been good for the business as a whole. "The provision →

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of education has given us a very long-term focus. It is envisioned that a knowledge community will grow and evolve from here to support the business ecosystem,” says Kenny.

“Our main objective is to focus on what we do best,” he adds, “but we also take a step back and think about what other areas we can be involved in. Obviously, education is one of them, but we really want to be a one-stop shop, with the whole suite of expertise within the group to take up any new project and provide a full 360-degree service.” Protasco has an increasing focus on the *whole* supply chain, with their trading and manufacturing arm making up a quarter of their 2021 revenue. “Acknowledging the whole supply chain creates value, not just profit ... We can evaluate the materials going out to projects and provide financial assistance to smaller subcontractors through our involvement in the materials.” Being involved in the end to end of all the processes has required careful planning and supply chain management from Kenny, but the reward has been healthy relationships with key partners and suppliers.



### Following through

For Protasco, all partners are held in high esteem, and Protasco’s promise is to never abandon a project even if it becomes a loss-making position. “The goal for all of our projects is to create value for the client, not just profit,” says Kenny. Underlying this is Protasco’s firm belief in operational excellence. “It has always been our motto to finish what we start and do the complete work that is required. We will hold ourselves to high standards and complete the job,” Kenny states. “We believe a sound long-term focus on quality will override any temporary fluctuations in the market.”

But for Protasco, the long-term is not just about doing what they have always done. Kenny admits, even though their industry is traditional, they are embracing digitisation. “On this front, we want to push forward, not just looking at documentation or operational digitisation, but fully embracing IoT [the Internet of things—physical objects with sensors, processing abilities, and other technologies that



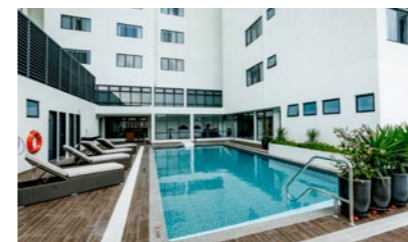
**We will hold ourselves to high standards and complete the job.**

exchange data],” says Kenny. Through this, he hopes for Protasco to remain at the cutting edge. “For example, when maintaining roads, we can embrace AI to scan for potholes, so we are trying to upgrade our technology, and this is what we’re spending our time on now.” With this, is it clear to see that the heart of Protasco is always these two things: Focus on what they do best and improve it. [🔗](#)



## EKA BINA CONSTRUCTION SDN BHD

was incorporated in Malaysia under the company Act 1965 on 19th August 2003 as a private limited company.



### OUR COMPANY CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN THE FOLLOWING 5 MAJOR AREAS OF WORKS:

- i) Building Construction
- ii) Civil Works & Infrastructure
- iii) Interior Design Works & Renovation Works
- iv) Trading
- v) Machinery Rental

