

ISSUE 247

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Malaysian and Swiss hotel groups strike management deal

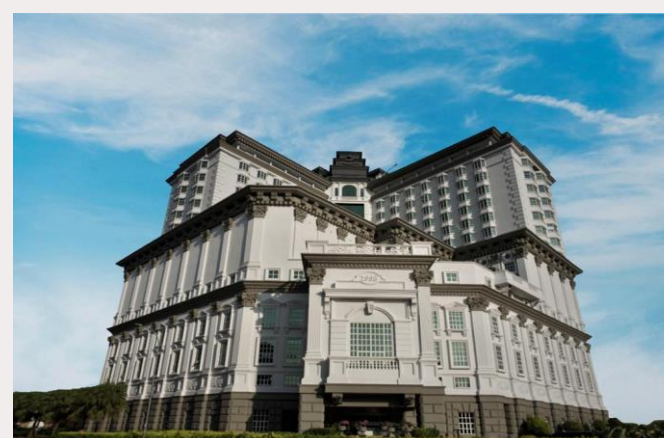
Malaysian hotel group Nautical Insight Sdn Bhd (NISB) has teamed up with a Swiss counterpart in a deal that will see them jointly manage 10 hotels in the country.

Under a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by NISB – which now owns the four-star LaCrista Hotel Melaka – and Swiss-Belhotel International Ltd (SBI), a joint-venture hotel management company will be set up for the purpose.

The two partners will have equal stakes in the new company, called Swiss Belhotel Malaysia (SBM), that will manage up to 2,000 hotel rooms in the country before 2025.

SBM will take over the management of LaCrista Hotel Melaka in February. NISB acquired the hotel, which remains the only asset in its portfolio, on July 10, 2019.

Swiss-Belhotel chairman and president Gavin Faull said that under the deal with NISB, the joint-venture company would embark on an “aggressive acquisition” of existing hotels to manage. [READ MORE](#)



MOTAC expects 5 million tourists from China

The Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry (MOTAC) expects five million tourist arrivals from China this year, compared to 3.1 million in 2019 given that no Chinese tourists were found with the deadly COVID-19 virus so far.

However, MOTAC Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing said the large number of Chinese tourist arrivals will only be met after China resumes group tour services to 20 countries including Malaysia on Feb 6.

Tiong reiterated that every Chinese tourist would undergo a COVID-19 screening test in their country before coming to Malaysia.

“Even though COVID-19 is still there, we have to move forward, let’s all take care of our own health,” Bernama reported him as saying. [READ MORE](#)



MINISTRY OF TOURISM, ARTS & CULTURE
MALAYSIA

Licensed accommodation premises must be registered with MOTAC

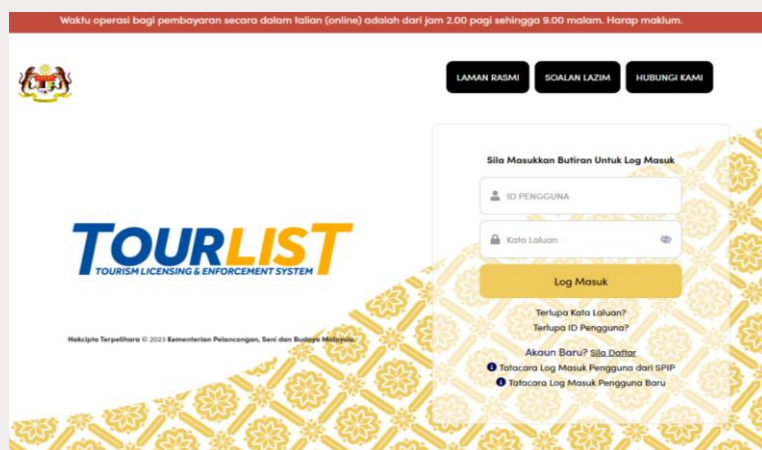
Premises licenced to provide accommodation under the local authorities need to be registered as Tourist Accommodation Premises under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC).

In a statement on Friday, MOTAC said the registration under the ministry was mandatory as stipulated in the Tourism Industry Act 1992 (Act 482).

MOTAC said this was aimed at controlling the increasing number of residential houses that are converted into homestays, as well as allowing operators to comply with the conditions imposed and to avoid any complaints from consumers.

Based on statistics, there are only 4,771 premises registered as Tourist Accommodation Premises while there are still many licensed and operating accommodation premises throughout the country that have not yet applied for registration under MOTAC.

"MOTAC urges all such premises to register before any enforcement action is taken," it said, adding that registration can be done online via the Tourism Licensing and Enforcement System (TOURLIST) at <https://www.tourlist.gov.my/>. **READ MORE**



AirAsia mulling widebody operations from Johor: Fernandes

AirAsia Aviation is considering plans to deploy its Airbus A330s from the southern Malaysian state of Johor, as the airline eyes opportunities to ramp up its presence in the state.

Tony Fernandes, CEO of AirAsia Aviation parent Capital A, says it would be “my next dream” to operate the A330s from Johor’s Senai airport to Australia, Japan and South Korea.

Fernandes was speaking at the launch of Asia Digital Engineering’s new hangar facility at Senai airport on 18 January. Asia Digital Engineering is the MRO unit of Capital A.

Senai airport is a hub for AirAsia Malaysia, which operates multiple domestic flights a day, as well as international flights to cities like Bangkok. Should AirAsia operate its widebodies – usually flown by medium-haul sister unit AirAsia X – from Johor, it would mark the first time the airline is flying them outside of its Kuala Lumpur hub.

Fernandes’ disclosure on 18 January comes as AirAsia Aviation units in Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia are in the midst of ramping up system-wide capacity following the Covid-19 pandemic. The group is in the process of bringing back parked aircraft to service.

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Penang's proposed STRA guidelines detrimental to tourism and economic growth, says Airbnb

Airbnb has proposed that short-term rental accommodations (STRA) should be allowed by default for strata buildings with commercial titles.

For strata buildings with residential titles, building residents should be able to continue using the existing Strata Management Act 2013 (SMA 2013). This was to collectively decide with a 75% vote via their Joint Management Body (JMB) or management corporation if any conditions or restrictions around STRA should be implemented, Airbnb added.

"The accommodation platform further highlights how the current guidelines proposed by the Penang government will be detrimental to the state's tourism industry and long-term economic growth," Airbnb said.

Airbnb also proposed a simple and low-cost online authorisation portal to ensure the host registration process was straightforward and accessible.

"The current proposed guidelines by the Penang government require an onerous process via which all Hosts must have registration with the Malaysian Companies Commission and submit physical forms to apply for additional licenses from local authorities," it said. [READ MORE](#)



Melaka targets 8.2m visitors for 2023

The state government is targeting 8.2 million visitors to Melaka this year after recording the arrival of more than 6 million tourists in 2022.

State Tourism, Heritage and Culture Committee chairman Datuk Muhammad Jailani Khamis said there was a 126.76 per cent increase in tourist arrivals last year compared to 2.6 million people for the same period in 2021.

“Of the total, 5.6 million were domestic tourists while 406,517 were foreign visitors. This year, we will further intensify events, promotions and interesting packages to further revitalise the tourism sector and improve the state’s economic growth.

“To achieve our target, the government will also implement various incentives through Tourism Melaka, including providing RM200,000 in incentives for tourism agents who bring visitors to tourism locations owned by the state government,” he said.

He said this at a ceremony with Melaka tourism industry players and launching of the 2023 Melaka Tourism Event Calendar in Ayer Keroh, which was also attended by Tourism Promotion Division general manager Sa’ari Basiron. [READ MORE](#)

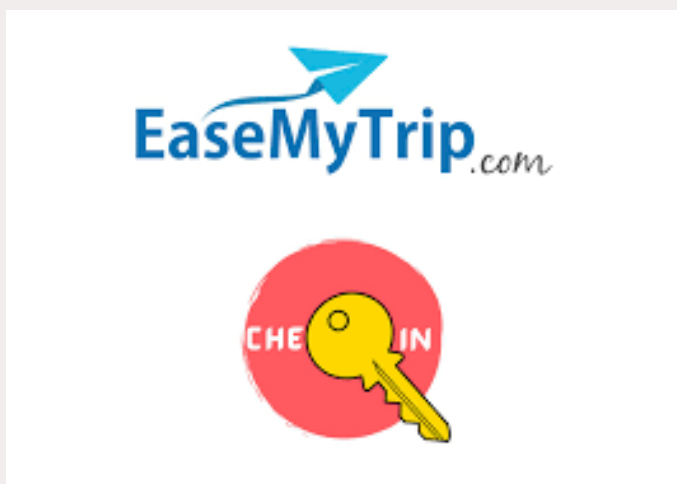


Easemytrip acquires a majority stake in hotel booking marketplace cheQin

Travel tech company Easemytrip has announced that it has acquired 55% stake in hotel booking marketplace company, cheQin, through the primary route. cheQin enables buyers and hoteliers real-time interaction between hoteliers and users. It has over 60,000 properties, including three, four and five-star hotels, private stays, vacation rentals, beach resorts among others. Moreover, more than 5,000 hotels in Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, **Malaysia**, and the United Arab Emirates have recently signed agreements with it.

This acquisition strengthens the travel tech platform's hold in technology, adaptability, personalization, and the acceptance of bulk booking and long stay requests. Additionally, with this Easemytrip will also be able to give its customers a wide range of innovative hotel booking options at the most competitive prices.

Nishant Pitti, CEO and Co-Founder of EaseMyTrip, said, "EaseMyTrip is focusing on the growth of its non-air segments. This acquisition is a step towards revolutionizing the hotel business altogether. Through cheQin, which is a unique app in the hotels industry, EaseMyTrip will diversify its hotel booking experience through technology support. [READ MORE](#)



Accor & Ennismore accelerate expansion across Southeast Asia in 2023

Accor, the region's largest international hotel operator, and Ennismore, the fastest-growing lifestyle hospitality company, will expand their portfolio with a series of key hotel and resort openings all across Southeast Asia in the year ahead. With close to 30 confirmed new properties under ten distinct brands in nine countries, 2023 marks an important milestone in the two group's regional development strategies.

Thailand is a key market and 2023 will see the arrival of a series of important new hotels and resorts in the kingdom.

In Malaysia, the 161-key **ibis PJCC Petaling Jaya** and the 172-key **Mercure Miri City Centre** are both due to open their doors by the middle of 2023.

In 2022, Accor and Ennismore signed a combined 30 hotels representing 8,700 keys across eight countries in Southeast Asia. These hotels will be operated under 15 brands within all segments, from economy to luxury. [READ MORE](#)



Rihga Royal Hotel To Be Sold To Canadian Fund

Osaka's Rihga Royal Hotel will be acquired by BentallGreenOak (BGO), a Canadian real estate investment firm. Although the price was not disclosed, it is estimated to be somewhere around 50 billion Yen (approx. US\$385 million). Operations by Royal Hotel are expected to continue post-sale.

The transfer of the trust beneficiary rights to the building and land is expected to take place in March. BGO is also acquiring a 30% stake in Royal Hotel, making it the largest shareholder. There is a growing trend in the sale and lease-back of some of Japan's major hotels as they seek to adopt an asset-light model in the wake of the pandemic.

With over 1,000 rooms, this is one of the leading luxury hotels in Osaka. The hotel opened in 1965 and was the hotel of choice for visiting dignitaries. The Crown Prince and Princess stayed there during the 1970 World Expo. The hotel was designed by Isoya Yoshida, an architect noted for his immaculate blending of traditional Japanese and modernist architecture.

After the sale, a further 13.5 billion Yen (US\$104 million) will be spent refurbishing the hotel in preparation for Expo 2025. The upgrades are expected to more than double the current average room rate. [READ MORE](#)

