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Key socioeconomic indicators of states improved markedly in 2022

The key socioeconomic indicators for some states improved in 2022, buoyed by a 248.1% rise in domestic tourism expenditure reaching RM64.1 billion versus RM18.4 billion in 2021, according to the State Socioeconomic Report 2022 released by the Statistics Department Malaysia (DOSM).

Chief statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin that domestic visitor numbers spiked by 160.1%, reaching a record of 171.6 million visitors against 2021's 66 million.

The reopening of Malaysia's borders and transition to the endemic phase on April 1, 2022, significantly affected the country's economy. This is evident in the GDP growth of 8.7% in 2022, compared to 3.3% in 2021, marking Malaysia's best performance since 2000.

Mohd Uzir stated that reopening economic activities, especially in tourism, along with interstate travel permission and government initiatives, revitalized the previously affected tourism industry, boosting Malaysia's economy.

Domestic tourists rose 337.1% to 65.1 million against 14.9 million in 2021, with Pahang recording the highest growth at 511.8% with 7.8 million arrivals from 1.3 million in 2021, elevating Pahang's GDP growth in arts, entertainment and other private services to 96.7%, Mohd Uzir said.

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Mavcom: Air traffic right applications rise 87.5% y-o-y in 2Q2023

Air traffic right (ATR) applications increased 87.5% year-on-year (y-o-y) in the second quarter of 2023 (2Q2023), according to the Malaysian Aviation Commission (Mavcom).

In its quarterly report on Monday (Aug 7), Mavcom said it has awarded a total of 57 ATRs to the Malaysian civil aviation sector between April and June 2023, comprising 45 international and 12 domestic routes.

The commission also reported that while the aviation industry continued its recovery, there was an 11.7% decrease in ATR applications in 2Q2023 versus 1Q2023. Nevertheless, when compared to 2Q2019, ATR applications showed a 5.3% increase, it said.

Moreover, the international sector saw a rise of 12 ATRs awarded in 2Q2023 compared with 2Q2019, accentuating the expansion of the industry and a return to normalcy.

Mavcom executive chairman Datuk Seri Saripuddin Kasim said the commission has approved ATRs for newer destinations as part of its efforts to ensure the aviation sector remains dynamic and responsive to global travel trends. [READ MORE](#)



More airlines expected to operate at Sultan Ismail Petra Airport

The Sultan Ismail Petra Airport (LTSIP) in Pengkalan Chepa is undergoing an upgrading project led by the federal government, expected to increase the airport's capacity and attract more airlines.

Presently, five airlines operate at the airport with a total of 151 flights weekly, across various routes. The five airlines operating at the airport are AirAsia, Batik Air, FireFly, Malaysia Airlines, and MYAirline,

As part of the project, the docking bays for aircraft will be expanded from five to eleven, and the parking area will be enlarged to accommodate up to 1,300 vehicles. Additional upgrades include enhancements to the check-in counters, baggage handling systems, and security system.

Furthermore, the number of business lots for small and medium enterprises at the terminal will increase to 40 from the current 26. The Transport Ministry (MOT) is closely monitoring the progress to ensure that the project is completed on schedule.

Despite slight delays, the LTSIP expansion and upgrading project is planned for completion by September 2024. The overall aim is to improve existing facilities and boost the airport terminal's capacity from 1.5 million passengers to four million, at a cost exceeding RM440 million. [READ MORE](#)



Batik Air to start KL-Istanbul service in October

Batik Air has been selected as an operator for the Kuala-Lumpur-Istanbul Sabiha Gökken International Airport route, with flights to begin in October, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

In a posting on his Facebook account following his virtual meeting with Türkiye President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Saturday night, Anwar reiterated Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd's commitment to invest £200 million (RM1.15 billion) in Istanbul Sabiha Gökken International Airport.

The prime minister was accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Kadir during the virtual meeting.

In 2022, Malaysia's trade with Türkiye rose by 12.6% year-on-year to US\$4.62 billion (RM21 billion). The trade surplus stood at US\$3.33 billion as Türkiye imports palm oil and palm oil-based agricultural products.

During the session, Anwar said, Erdoğan gave a clear commitment to fulfilling his invitation to visit Malaysia in the near future to strengthen the relationship between the two countries. "We have also agreed to meet face-to-face during the United Nations General Assembly in New York, United States next month," he added. – Bernama. [READ MORE](#)



Abang Johari: Sarawak studying e-resident programme to facilitate short-term stay of foreign professionals

The Sarawak government plans to introduce an e-resident programme to facilitate the entry of professionals and specialists from around the world into the state.

Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg (pictured) said that he had sent a team to study the mechanism and implementation of a similar programme in Estonia, a country that Sarawak could emulate as a model for this initiative.

“Once I have the model [for implementation], I will bring it to the state assembly to get approval for e-resident,” he told reporters after attending the launch of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak’s Tun Abang Haji Openg Data Centre (TAHODC) at Kota Samarahan on August 4.

He said the state government would work together with the industries in Sarawak as well as the embassies or high commissions to screen the e-resident applications before approving them. “It must be G2G (government to government). We are going to use the data provided by the government of the applicant’s country before we issue e-resident,” he said.

Abang Johari said the status of e-resident holders would be similar to those who are permanent residents of the state, where they could enter and leave Sarawak without immigration hassle. [READ MORE](#)



Sabah records nearly 1 mln tourists in first five months of 2023

Sabah recorded a total of 988,680 domestic and international tourist arrivals in the first five months of this year, a 77.1 per cent increase from the 558,169 visitors in the same period last year, said Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor.

He said this clearly demonstrates that the tourism sector in Sabah will continue to develop strongly this year and in the years to come.

“The state government will continue to strive to revitalise and develop the tourism sector through various programmes this year. The re-opening of the country’s borders has had a positive impact and encouraged the recovery of the tourism sector in Sabah.

“Of the 988,680 tourists who visited Sabah, 282,450 were international tourists and 706,230 were locals, generating an estimated RM2.02 billion in tourism receipts from January to May 2023,” he said in his speech at the launch of the Sandakan Festival 2023 at Padang Bandaran Sandakan here last night.

Hajiji said the state government is anticipating the arrival of 2.2 million tourists to Sabah this year, which will generate RM4.1 billion in revenue.

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Swettenham Pier will be home port for cruise ship industry, says Loke

The Transport Ministry intends to make the Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal (SPCT) as the home port for the cruise industry in an effort to bring more tourists to Penang.

Its minister Anthony Loke Siew Fook said Penang was a state that had great potential in the tourism sector and he plans to improve the industry.

"Under the Transport Ministry, our plan is to implement Fly & Cruise in Penang where SPCT will be used as a home port while the Penang International Airport (PIA) will be upgraded to allow more tourists to visit the state," he said after holding a visit with the DAP candidate for Padang Kota area, Chow Kon Yeow, here on August 5.

According to him, the PIA expansion project would be implemented soon and it would be a catalyst project to attract more tourists to visit Penang.

In addition, Loke said the new Penang ferry service would start operating on Monday connecting Pangkalan Raja Tun Uda (PRTU–Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal) and Pangkalan Sultan Abdul Halim (PSAH) in Butterworth. He said apart from the ferry project and PIA expansion, his ministry would also implement the light rail transit (LRT) project in Penang, which might take longer to be realised. [READ MORE](#)



Malacca offers 23,000 hotel rooms for TMM2024

In preparation for the Visit Melaka Year 2024, 23,448 hotel rooms and homestays involving 510 premises, including hotels, resorts, apartments, and guest houses with various star ratings, are ready to meet tourist demands in Melaka. State Tourism, Heritage, Arts and Culture committee chairman Datuk Abdul Razak Abdul Rahman announced that 67 of these premises, totaling 7,966 rooms, are registered with Melaka's Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC).

The state government has formed a review committee to ensure quality service for tourists at these accommodations. Abdul Razak also mentioned the ongoing construction of new hotels, expected to begin operations in January next year, with an estimated capacity of at least 500 rooms across five hotels.

The star rating will only be awarded upon 100% completion of the hotels, as various aspects such as the kitchen, restaurant, spa, swimming pool, children's facilities, and security need to be fine-tuned.

In addition to the preparation of accommodations, the state government is actively promoting TMM2024 abroad. Abdul Razak indicated that the government is collaborating with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through Wisma Putra to publicize the event through Malaysian embassies.

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CapitaLand Ascott Trust posts 31% higher H1 gross profit at S\$154.4 million

CapitaLand Ascott Trust (CLAS) has proposed to acquire three lodging assets at \$530.8 million.

The three assets are a 230-unit hotel in London, The Cavendish London; a 136-unit hotel in Dublin, Temple Bar Hotel; and a 185-unit serviced residence in Jakarta, Ascott Kuningan Jakarta.

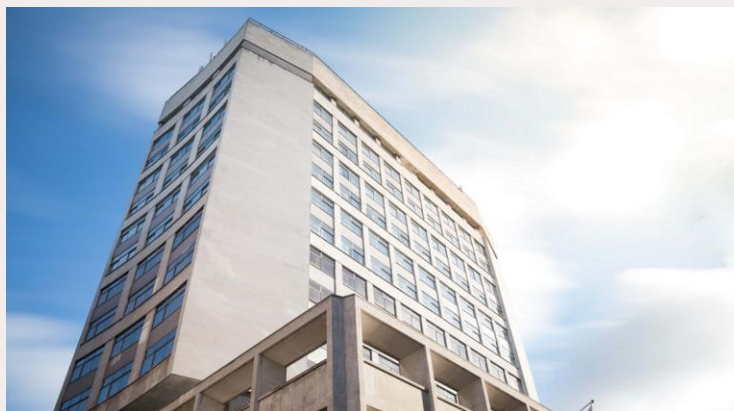
Upon completion of the proposed acquisition, CLAS is expected to increase its total distribution by \$13.5 million and its distribution per stapled security (DPS) by 1.8% on a FY2022 pro-forma basis.

The ebitda yield of the proposed acquisition is 6.2% on a FY2022 pro-forma basis, say CLAS's managers on Aug 2.

The managers have also proposed equity fundraising comprising an offering of new stapled securities in CLAS to raise gross proceeds of approximately \$300.0 million.

The market revenue per available unit (RevPAU) in London, Dublin and Jakarta have exceeded pre-pandemic levels of 2019, say CLAS's managers.

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Hilton to quadruple its presence in Saudi Arabia, aims to open over 50 new hotels

Hilton has announced plans to open more than 50 new hotels across 10 of its brands, making the kingdom the company's largest pipeline market in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

The company has been announcing multiple signings as it works towards expanding its portfolio to more than 75 trading properties across the country. The latest include the Conrad Riyadh Laysen Valley, and other signings in Abha, Hilton The Point Residences and Canopy by Hilton The Point.

Carlos Khneisser, vice president, Development, Hilton Middle East & Africa, said: "Saudi Arabia's rapid evolution continues to provide exciting growth opportunities for Hilton, and we're working closely with our owners to introduce more award-winning hospitality brands in existing and new locations throughout the country.

Hilton and partners aim to grow portfolio in Saudi Arabia with plans to more than quadruple its presence in Saudi Arabia over the next few years, Hilton is working closely with owners and developers to enhance business and leisure travel destinations throughout the country.

In partnership with Mashareq Investment, Hilton plans to bring its second Conrad Hotels & Resorts property to Saudi Arabia. The 170-key Conrad Riyadh Laysen Valley is expected to open in 2025. [READ MORE](#)

