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## Mandarin Oriental Anchors Desaru Coast's Expansion and Investment Momentum

Mandarin Oriental has joined Desaru Coast, replacing One&Only and marking a strategic shift in the resort's positioning. The hotel, now named The Sireya, will be rebranded as Mandarin Oriental Desaru Coast in January 2026. It will also feature 40 branded residences, adding long-term vibrancy to the development. Desaru Coast spans 4,000 acres and is led by Desaru Development Holdings, a subsidiary of DRH under Khazanah Nasional.

Currently, Desaru Coast hosts four hotels — The Westin, Hard Rock Hotel, Anantara, and The Sireya — with 800 keys. DRH targets doubling capacity by 2027, supported by upcoming projects from Riaz Group and ECM Libra, both pending approvals.

The area's prospects are further supported by the Johor-Singapore SEZ, backed by RM5 million in federal funds and infrastructure upgrades. Johor is also investing in talent development. Meanwhile, DRH enhances appeal through partnerships like ONE°15 Marina and cultural events like Ombak Festival, reinforcing long-term destination value.



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## I-Bhd Boosts Hospitality Offerings with AI and Robotics Integration

I-Bhd has committed RM10 million to roll out AI and robotics infrastructure across its hospitality and commercial portfolio by 2028. This initiative aims to enhance internal operations and guest experiences, including visitor flow, service delivery, and predictive maintenance.

Implementation begins at Mercu Maybank in i-City, Shah Alam, and will expand to key assets such as Wyndham Suites KLCC, Wyndham Suites i-City, Wyndham Garden, and DoubleTree by Hilton i-City. These upgrades position I-Bhd's hospitality offerings at the forefront of smart service delivery.

Already, a robotic chef operates at Wyndham Suites KLCC to support large-scale catering, while AI-enhanced security is in place at Mercu Maybank. Future applications include food delivery, housekeeping and elderly care across the portfolio. Through the i-City SuperApp, tenants will access shared Robotics-as-a-Service functions. I-Bhd is also in talks with tech leaders like Unitree, DeepSeek and Baidu to reinforce its long-term vision of an AI-powered, intelligent urban ecosystem.



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## Pavilion REIT Expands Hospitality Portfolio Through RM360 Million Placement

Pavilion REIT has raised RM360 million via private placement, issuing 257.14 million new units at RM1.40 each, reflecting a 3.9% discount to its five-day volume-weighted average. The funds will partly finance its RM480 million acquisition of Banyan Tree Kuala Lumpur and Pavilion Hotel Kuala Lumpur.

The balance will be funded through borrowings. As of March 2025, Pavilion REIT held RM3.39 billion in total debt, split between RM400 million in short-term and RM2.99 billion in long-term borrowings.

This acquisition, announced last December, is classified as a related-party transaction involving companies linked to Tan Sri Desmond Lim, who also chairs Pavilion REIT's management company.

By adding the two hotels, Pavilion REIT aims to diversify its portfolio. The Pavilion Kuala Lumpur Mall's contribution to total asset value is expected to drop from 61.4% to 58%. The REIT's portfolio includes Pavilion Bukit Jalil, Intermark Mall, Da Men Mall, Elite Pavilion Mall, and Pavilion Tower.



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## LIMA 2025 Secures RM11 Billion, Breaks International Participation Record

LIMA 2025 concluded on May 24 with RM11 billion in transactions secured over five days. Co-organised by the Ministry of Defence and Global Exhibitions & Conferences Sdn Bhd (GEC), the 17th edition welcomed more than 860 companies from 24 countries, marking its most internationally represented event to date.

The exhibition, themed “Innovate Today, Thrive Tomorrow,” was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and closed by Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin. The showcase drew significant attention from trade and public visitors alike.

Across the event, visitors engaged with cutting-edge naval and aviation innovations while attending nine conferences focused on sustainability, leadership and future-forward technologies. The display reinforced Malaysia’s position as a growing aerospace and maritime hub. GEC managing director Abd Hafiz Abu Bakar highlighted that LIMA 2025's success stemmed from innovation, unity and collaboration. The 18th edition of Lima is expected to return in 2027.



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## Sarawak Eyes Japanese Interest in Growing SMM2H Participation

Sarawak is poised to attract more Japanese nationals through the Sarawak Malaysia My Second Home (SMM2H) programme, following a steady rise in tourist arrivals from Japan. The programme is already popular among Chinese nationals and gaining traction with European participants.

Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah highlighted Sarawak's appeal lies in its safety, reliable medical infrastructure and quality international schools—especially relevant for elderly applicants and families. These factors align with common motivations for long-term foreign residency.

As of mid-May this year, 265 applications had been approved, in addition to 560 approvals recorded last year. These applicants contributed to the local economy, with RM176.9 million placed in fixed deposits.

The minister sees potential in expanding outreach to the Japanese market, positioning Sarawak as a secure and attractive destination for relocation under the SMM2H initiative. Efforts to promote its offerings will continue through tourism events and government engagement.



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## Ascend Airways Malaysia Targets November 2025 Cargo Launch

Ascend Airways Malaysia, part of Avia Solutions Group, has advanced to phase three of its Air Operator Certificate (AOC) application with the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia. After obtaining a Conditional Air Service Permit from MAVCOM in 2024, the airline is on track to begin cargo operations by November 2025.

Based in Kuala Lumpur, the carrier plans to offer both cargo and passenger services. Its first Boeing 737-800 freighter is expected in the third quarter of 2025, supporting the final AOC requirements. Two passenger aircraft will follow by late 2025 and early 2026.

CEO Germal Singh Khera emphasized the company's goal to be a reliable ACMI partner in the Asia-Pacific, commending the Malaysian authorities for their strong support and vision. This backing, he noted, has laid a firm groundwork for regional aviation growth. The airline will also strengthen Avia Solutions Group's seasonal fleet strategy, which includes ongoing regulatory efforts in Thailand and the Philippines.



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## Batik Air Launches Direct Route to Boost Timor-Leste Tourism

Batik Air has introduced a direct air link between Kuala Lumpur and Dili, becoming the first Malaysian airline to offer scheduled commercial flights to Timor-Leste. This strategic move supports Malaysia's tourism sector while expanding regional connectivity.

The twice-weekly flights, operated by Boeing 737 aircraft, take approximately four hours and fifteen minutes. With Kuala Lumpur International Airport serving as a major hub, passengers from Dili can now access over 60 destinations across 20 countries, including Asia, the Middle East and Australia.

CEO Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy highlighted the route's potential not only for passenger traffic but also for attracting Timorese travellers to explore Malaysia's diverse tourism offerings. The expansion aligns with Batik Air's vision to strengthen its international network. Tourism Malaysia Director General Datuk Manoharan Periasamy welcomed the new route, calling it a timely initiative to deepen bilateral tourism ties and enhance the momentum ahead of the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign.



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## Malaysia Airlines Unveils Premium Campaign for Elevated Travel Experience

Malaysia Airlines has launched its global campaign Time for Premium Escapades, offering exclusive Business Class fares from 4 to 19 June 2025 for travel until 31 May 2026. Travellers from Malaysia, Singapore and ASEAN can enjoy return fares starting at RM699 for domestic and RM1,149 for international routes.

Enrich members received early access through a Priority Sale on 4 and 5 June, with added savings. Designed for seamless comfort, the campaign features private transfers, fast-track services, lie-flat seats, gourmet dining via Chef-on-Call and Wi-Fi connectivity. The new A330neo aircraft with Elevation suites further enhances the premium offering.

Business Class guests will enjoy curated meals, upgraded lounge access, pyjamas and family-friendly amenities, underscoring the airline's focus on care and sophistication. Economy Class travellers also benefit from competitive fares and thoughtful service, starting at RM119 domestically. Bookings are available via Malaysia Airlines' official channels, inviting all to rediscover flying with warmth and distinction.



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## Malaysia Airlines Showcases Premium Offerings at Seoul Tourism Exhibition

Malaysia Airlines is participating in the 2025 Seoul International Tourism Exhibition (SITF) at COEX, Seoul, until June 8, highlighting its premium services and warm Malaysian hospitality. A key highlight includes a special appearance by Manchester United legend Park Ji-sung, alongside immersive activities such as a virtual reality experience of the new A330neo aircraft and interactive promotions for Korean travellers.

Customers booking through the airline's official site or partners by June 8 can enjoy up to 25% discounts. Recognising Korea as a strategic market, Malaysia Airlines has operated there since 1979 and now runs 12 weekly flights from Incheon, offering strong regional and global connectivity.

To enhance comfort and familiarity, Korean-speaking crew are available onboard, and the in-flight menu features popular Korean dishes as part of the "Best of Asia" offering. The airline aims to deepen ties with Korean travellers through cultural showcases, strengthening its presence in North Asia's tourism landscape.



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