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The Millen by Marriott debuts as Penang's first Autograph Collection property

HNG Capital Sdn Bhd has transformed Penang's former Northam All Suite Hotel, once owned by the Employees Provident Fund, into The Millen, the island's first Autograph Collection property under Marriott International. The acquisition in 2016 and a bold rebranding effort launched in 2020 reflect the group's long-term vision for value creation through landmark revitalisation.

After five years of extensive investment, The Millen now redefines luxury along Penang's Millionaire's Row. The 146-room five-star property blends colonial charm and modern sophistication, offering sweeping views of the Andaman Sea and George Town, with standout features including the 156-square-metre Silver Suite, one of Penang's largest presidential suites.

HNG Capital CEO Datuk Sean H'ng Chun Hsiang said the project underscores the company's commitment to high-value, community-driven investments. Beyond luxury, The Millen engages local artisans and talents, contributing to Penang's economy and reinforcing its growing reputation as a world-class destination.



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Sheraton Johor Bahru Strengthens Malaysia's Hospitality Market with Flagship Opening

Sheraton Hotels & Resorts has expanded its footprint in Malaysia with the opening of Sheraton Johor Bahru, a 345-room property strategically located near the Singapore Johor Bahru Causeway. The hotel marks the brand's first in Johor Bahru and reflects Marriott Bonvoy's ongoing commitment to deliver global standards of hospitality across key regional destinations.

Designed around community, productivity and comfort, Sheraton Johor Bahru features family suites with ocean inspired décor, soundproof work pods and an exclusive Sheraton Club lounge for premium guests. The hotel also houses four dining venues including Daily Social, &More by Sheraton, Soo Noodles and Unspoken Bar, offering a diverse culinary experience to both travellers and locals.

With 2,295 square metres of event space across eight venues, including a 1,400 capacity ballroom, the hotel caters to corporate and social gatherings. Its leisure facilities, from a fitness centre to the city's largest children's pool, further reinforce its family friendly positioning.



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Big Tiny and IOI Properties Launch Eco-Friendly Tiny Homes in Puchong

Singapore-based Big Tiny Pte Ltd has made its Malaysian debut with two sustainable tiny homes at IOI Properties Group's Amigo Clubhouse in 16 Sierra, Puchong South. Managed by IOI via the clubhouse, the collaboration aims to promote eco-conscious tourism while aligning with IOI's Sustain Roadmap 2030 for responsible development and community engagement.

Each tiny home, measuring 137 square feet, features solar panels, rainwater harvesting and composting systems, alongside modern comforts such as air conditioning, a queen bed and private bathroom facilities. Guests can rent the homes for RM450 to RM650 per night, with access to Amigo Clubhouse amenities, offering a blend of comfort and sustainability for short-haul travelers.

Big Tiny's expansion into Malaysia complements its growing global portfolio of 650 tiny homes across 19 countries. The company's production plant in Kulai, Johor, supports its scalable model of transforming underutilised land into eco-friendly, low-impact destinations.



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Malaysia Targets RM200 Million Homestay Revenue Ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026

Malaysia is setting its sights on generating RM200 million in homestay revenue next year as part of the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign. Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the initiative aims to elevate local homestays as a hallmark of Malaysian hospitality while strengthening rural economies and preserving cultural heritage.

The Malaysia Homestay Experience Programme has already recorded RM39.83 million in earnings and 620,000 visitors as of August, with Sabah, Johor and Pahang leading participation. To further enhance quality and competitiveness, the government is offering over 12 financing schemes and grants to operators, alongside infrastructure upgrades worth RM1.1 million for access roads and community facilities.

Efforts are also underway to expand international promotion through exhibitions, digital platforms, and student exchange programmes. Special training under JELITA TVET is empowering women operators, ensuring the homestay sector remains sustainable and globally competitive.



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Sarawak Targets RM2 Billion Boost Through 720 Business Events by 2030

Sarawak is setting its sights on securing 720 business events between 2026 and 2030 under the 13th Malaysia Plan, projecting an estimated economic impact of RM2.06 billion. Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg said the sector remains a key pillar in the state's Post-Covid-19 Development Strategy 2030, with subvention funds increased by 144% since 2021 to attract international events and build local expertise.

The state's commitment is supported by the completion of the Legacy Impact Master Action Plan, a strategic roadmap to ensure business events drive social, economic and environmental value. Sarawak also aims to achieve 50% growth in secured events, with half generating measurable legacies by 2030.

To strengthen capacity, investments are ongoing in key infrastructure including AirBorneo, the expansion of the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching, and a new convention centre in Miri, positioning Sarawak as a collaborative global hub for impactful business events.



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RM4.2 Billion Jesselton Docklands to Redefine Kota Kinabalu Waterfront

The RM4.2 billion Jesselton Docklands project is set to catalyse Sabah's economic growth by creating jobs, attracting investments and elevating tourism. Located on 35 acres of prime land near the old Kota Kinabalu Port, the development aims to transform the city's waterfront into a vibrant and sustainable urban destination, marking another milestone in the state's transformation journey.

Developed by Suria Capital in partnership with BEDI Development, the project will feature an international cruise terminal, hotels, residences, cultural precincts and commercial zones. Phase One will deliver hotels, branded suites, offices and retail spaces, followed by the continuation of the Jesselton Quay development under SBC Corporation Berhad.

Complemented by infrastructure upgrades, including a new ferry terminal, Jesselton Docklands is designed under the principle of "profit with responsibility." The master plan by Norwegian firm Snohetta integrates mangrove gardens and land reclamation efforts, aligning urban growth with long-term environmental sustainability.



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Industry Calls for Strategic Focus Ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026

Tourism leaders are urging the government to prioritise infrastructure, connectivity and unique experiences in Budget 2026 to strengthen Malaysia's competitiveness ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026. Trip.com Malaysia's Stephane Thong said visa-free entry for China and India travellers has boosted arrivals, placing Malaysia among the top five destinations for Chinese tourists during Golden Week.

Tourism contributed RM291.9 billion, or 15.1% of GDP in 2024, reflecting its vital role in economic growth. Experts warned that Malaysia risks being outpaced by Thailand and Singapore unless it focuses on value-driven growth. Proposals include a Tourism Innovation Fund, digital payment integration across ASEAN, and stronger support for eco, halal and medical tourism.

Universiti Teknologi Mara's Prof Dr Hafiz Hanafiah added that restoring air routes and upgrading tourism products are essential to enhance visitor spending and position Malaysia as a high-value destination.



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Rising Lao Visitor Arrivals Boost Malaysia's Sustainable Tourism Vision

Malaysia has recorded a sharp increase in Lao tourist arrivals, with 14,733 visitors in the first half of 2025—nearly matching the full-year total of 2024. The surge reflects Malaysia's growing appeal among regional travellers as the country prepares for Visit Malaysia 2026, launched by Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in Melaka to drive sustainable and inclusive tourism growth.

The campaign aims to position tourism as a catalyst for economic empowerment, social development and cultural preservation. Investments will focus on training, digital innovation and community-based tourism to ensure equitable benefits for local communities. Special emphasis is placed on empowering women, youth and entrepreneurs through targeted programmes and skill development.

Cultural exchange remains central to the strategy, with efforts to enhance authentic travel experiences through heritage trails, culinary tourism and creative events—reinforcing Malaysia's goal to build a resilient, inclusive and globally competitive tourism industry.



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Malaysia Strengthens Global Tourism Outreach Ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026

Malaysia's tourism players are urged to intensify partnerships with overseas travel agents to attract more foreign visitors and enhance global competitiveness. Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing said international cooperation is essential to showcase Malaysia's diverse products, culture and hospitality while ensuring tourists receive high-quality experiences.

Speaking at the 2025 Tourism Malaysia Overseas Directors Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Tiong highlighted the need for more creative digital promotions and improved flight connectivity to key markets. He also stressed stronger collaboration between the public and private sectors, including airlines, tour operators and digital platforms, to support the government's target of 35 million international visitors and RM147 billion in tourism revenue by 2026.

Tiong reaffirmed the ministry's aim to achieve 40 million tourist arrivals this year through strategic campaigns in markets such as China, India, the Middle East and ASEAN, reflecting Malaysia's commitment to sustainable tourism growth.



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Selangor Advances to Lead Southeast Asia's Medical Tourism Industry

Selangor is strengthening its position as Southeast Asia's premier medical tourism hub through robust healthcare infrastructure, government support, and a growing international presence. The state now hosts 60 private hospitals equipped with advanced technology and internationally certified specialists, offering treatments in cardiology, oncology, fertility, and more. Its strong connectivity via Kuala Lumpur International Airport enhances accessibility for global patients seeking high-quality, affordable care.

The Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC) noted Selangor's continued leadership, driven by successful promotions in Indonesia and the MedTravel Selangor campaign. Key hospitals, including Sunway Medical Centre and Subang Jaya Medical Centre, are spearheading innovation in medical technology and digital health to attract regional markets.

Indonesia remains Selangor's largest source of medical tourists, generating RM474.7 million in revenue. With campaigns such as "Liburan Sehat Ya Di Selangor Aja!", the state targets a further 3-5% growth in arrivals, solidifying its role as Malaysia's medical excellence gateway.



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Malaysia Secures Stronger Mandate in ICAO Council Re-election for 2025-2028

Malaysia has been re-elected to the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Council for the 2025–2028 term, reaffirming its position as a leading voice in global aviation. The country secured 154 votes at the 42nd ICAO General Assembly in Montreal — its highest tally since 2013 — earning the seventh seat among 14 contested Part III positions.

The ICAO Council plays a vital role in setting international aviation standards, formulating safety policies and driving strategic directions across 193 member states. Malaysia’s continued presence allows it to influence key decisions and advocate for sustainability, safety and innovation within the global aviation ecosystem.

Industry leaders, including those from Malaysia Aviation Group, AirAsia and Batik Air, hailed the re-election as a proud achievement. They emphasised that the strong mandate reflects international confidence in Malaysia’s leadership and long-standing commitment to advancing the global aviation agenda.



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Daily Chengdu-Penang Flights Strengthen Air Connectivity and Chinese Tourist Arrivals

Penang's air connectivity to China will strengthen as Sichuan Airlines increases its Chengdu-Penang direct flights to daily service starting late October, extending through March 2026 under the airline's winter schedule. The route, launched in April with five weekly flights, has shown encouraging performance, prompting the expansion.

According to Penang State Tourism and Economic Committee chairman Wong Hon Wai, nine airlines now connect Penang with six major Chinese cities, forming a robust network across East, South, and Southwest China. With the new schedule, total weekly flights between Penang and China will increase from 61 to 63.

Between January and July 2025, Penang received 121,030 Chinese visitors via international flights, marking a sharp 103.7% rise compared to last year. The strong growth, driven by improved air access, reinforces Penang's position as one of Malaysia's premier international tourism and investment destinations.



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MBSB Commits RM1.3 Billion to Drive Weststar Aviation Expansion

Malaysia Building Society Bhd (MBSB) has committed RM1.3 billion in syndicated Islamic financing to support the expansion of Weststar Aviation Services, the aviation arm of The Weststar Group. The facility covers helicopter acquisitions, working capital, corporate purposes, and foreign exchange management, reinforcing Weststar's regional leadership in aviation.

MBSB Investment Bank serves as joint lead arranger for the financing, which underscores MBSB's confidence in Malaysia's aviation and aerospace potential. Chairman Datuk Wan Kamaruzaman Wan Ahmad said the initiative reflects MBSB's commitment to advancing Malaysia's competitiveness in strategic industries that connect the nation to global supply chains and energy corridors.

Weststar managing director Tan Sri Dr Syed Azman Syed Ibrahim said the partnership will unlock new opportunities through innovative financial solutions. He added that Weststar aims to accelerate its expansion locally and internationally while enhancing operational resilience and strengthening Malaysia's position in the regional aviation landscape.



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