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MUI Advances Divestment Strategy with Corus Hotel Kuala Lumpur Sale

Malayan United Industries Bhd (MUI) is set to sell the 13-storey, 388-room Corus Hotel Kuala Lumpur to a listed property developer for RM250 million to RM280 million. The freehold asset, revalued at RM287.69 million in 2022, sits on a prime 1.48-acre site near the Petronas Twin Towers. This move aligns with MUI's ongoing divestment plan. Trading in its securities was suspended pending a material announcement.

The sale follows several recent disposals, including a 389.7-acre land near Port Dickson for RM424 million, a stockbroking and asset management business for RM90 million, and PM Holdings for RM36.7 million. MUI also owns Corus Hotel Hyde Park in London, valued at RM932.54 million.

Led by CEO and chairman Andrew Khoo, MUI has been loss-making for over a decade, with RM714.28 million in net debt. For 9MFY2025, it posted a RM58.33 million loss despite 10.9% revenue growth to RM369.09 million.

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Marriott and SKS Group to Rebrand Bandar Seri Alam Hotel

Marriott International and SKS Group will reopen a legacy hotel in Bandar Seri Alam as Four Points by Sheraton Johor Bahru in the first quarter of 2026 after a major rebranding. This marks SKS Hospitality's debut in franchise operations, a step described by its Head, Meera Raj, as bold and significant for the group's growth.

The hotel will feature 150 rooms, comprising 70 Twin Rooms, 70 King Rooms, and 10 Three-Bedroom Duplexes. Premium units will offer added comforts such as coffee machines and welcome drinks. Guests will enjoy an all-day dining restaurant with indoor and alfresco seating, a 45-seat lobby bar, and extensive function facilities including a divisible Grand Ballroom, Junior Ballroom, meeting rooms, and a pre-function space.

This will be SKS Group's second Four Points property and Marriott Bonvoy's fourth in Malaysia, joining Four Points Desaru, Sheraton Johor Bahru, and Courtyard by Marriott Subang, set to open in the coming years.

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Ascott to Anchor Johor Bahru's Coronation Square with Flagship Hotel

Ascott, the lodging arm of CapitaLand Investment, will manage the hotel component of Coronation Square, a RM5 billion integrated development in Johor Bahru's Ibrahim International Business District (IIBD). The IIBD sits within the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ), positioning the project at the heart of growing cross-border activity. The agreement with Malaysian developer Coronade Properties marks the first major hospitality collaboration since the JS-SEZ pact in January 2025.

Kevin Goh, CEO of The Ascott Limited, said the project reflects strong momentum in cross-border cooperation and confidence in the region's growth. Singapore's Minister of State for Trade and Industry Alvin Tan noted the JS-SEZ combines Singapore's global research, development and financial strengths with Johor's expanding talent and resources.

The five-star Ascott Coronation Square Johor Bahru will occupy Tower 1 and feature 207 rooms. It aims to capture demand from rising business, tourism and investment flows between Malaysia and Singapore.

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Exsim Hospitality to Revamp and Lease The Summit Hotel Subang

Exsim Hospitality Bhd, formerly Pan Malaysia Holdings, has partnered with AmFIRST Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) to refurbish and rebrand The Summit Hotel Subang USJ. The RM45 million upgrade will be managed by its unit, Mana Mana Holdings, for a fixed fee of RM220,000 over 15 months. Following completion, Mana Mana will lease and operate the hotel for an initial three-year term, paying a base rent of RM600,000 monthly plus revenue sharing, with options for automatic extensions.

The refurbishment aims to raise both the property's income and value. Funding will come from borrowings and internal resources, with AmFIRST REIT's gearing expected to increase slightly from 47.1% to 48.5% if fully debt-funded. The REIT retains the right to terminate the exercise if cost negotiations exceed projections.

The hotel is expected to reopen within 15 months. On Wednesday, Exsim Hospitality's shares closed at 36 sen, while AmFIRST REIT settled at 30.5 sen.

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Kuala Lumpur Luxury Hotels Set for Strong Growth Momentum

Kuala Lumpur's luxury hotel sector is expected to perform strongly over the next year, driven by the upcoming 47th Asean Summit in October and the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign. Park Hyatt Kuala Lumpur general manager Herman Kemp noted that 2023 was a record year for many five-star hotels, and the combination of major conferences this year and the tourism drive in 2026 signals a bullish outlook.

Park Hyatt Kuala Lumpur, located in the Merdeka 118 tower, spans floors 75 to 114 with 252 guestrooms, including 27 suites. The presidential suite covers 6,780 sq ft, while standard rooms measure 570 sq ft. Facilities include premium amenities designed to serve business and leisure guests.

Kemp emphasised Hyatt Hotels Corporation's confidence in Malaysia's premium hospitality market, supported by rising tourism and an improving economy post-pandemic. The Asean Summit will gather regional leaders, reinforcing Kuala Lumpur's position as a high-profile hospitality destination.

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Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru Shine as Top Repeat Destinations

Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru have ranked among Asia's top ten destinations with the highest number of repeat visitors in Agoda's latest list for the first half of 2025. Kuala Lumpur remains a draw with its cosmopolitan atmosphere, rich cultural heritage, diverse cuisine, premium shopping, and iconic landmarks. Johor Bahru is rising as a leisure hub, offering family attractions, lifestyle experiences, and strong transport connectivity.

The list is led by Bangkok, Tokyo, Seoul, Bali, and Osaka, followed by Taipei, Kuala Lumpur, Da Nang, Johor Bahru, and Hong Kong. Agoda's Malaysia and Brunei country director Fabian Teja said the presence of both cities reflects their enduring strength and appeal in the region's competitive tourism market.

He added that the trend underscores travellers' desire to revisit familiar places, whether to explore new spots, return to favourite locations, or enjoy familiar comforts, highlighting the sustained appeal of Malaysia's urban destinations.

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Malaysia Sees Strong Growth in Chinese Tourist Arrivals in 2024

Malaysia recorded nearly 1.8 million Chinese tourist arrivals between January and May 2025, boosted by the visa waiver introduced in 2024. Deputy Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Khairul Firdaus Akbar Khan said arrivals surged from 1.6 million in 2023 to 3.4 million last year. The ministry is actively promoting Malaysia to Chinese travellers, with a focus on Muslim-friendly tourism that welcomes visitors of all backgrounds.

Efforts include hosting over 100 imams from China and Europe to experience Malaysia's offerings first-hand. The initiative aims to strengthen the country's position as a preferred destination for Muslim travellers. These promotions are supported by collaborations with travel agencies and other tourism partners.

In response to questions on equitable benefits for east coast states, Khairul Firdaus said integrated campaigns through Tourism Malaysia and the Islamic Tourism Centre are highlighting attractions like the Crystal Mosque, generating spillovers for homestays, handicrafts, and traditional food industries.

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Malaysia's Celebrity Appeal Strengthens with Rising Foreign Investments

Malaysia is seeing a surge in interest from international celebrities, particularly from Hong Kong, investing in properties and businesses. This trend aligns with government initiatives such as the revamped Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) programme, which generated RM839.9 million in revenue last year, including RM237.2 million from property. The recent five-year extension of visa-free entry for Chinese travellers further enhances the country's attractiveness.

Prominent figures include Amy Yip, who invested in boutique and durian-themed hotels in Penang; Grace Chan and Kevin Cheng, active in brand launches and exploring retail opportunities; Lily Chung and Hugo Ng, who opened the 9 Kopitiam franchise; and Andy Lau, who owns two luxury homes in Kuala Lumpur. Eric Tsang also purchased property and endorsed local developments.

Property consultant Tara Lim highlighted Malaysia's affordability, cultural familiarity, quality education, and popular hotspots in Penang and Kuala Lumpur, noting increased inquiries from Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Myanmar.

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Scoot and Tourism Malaysia Forge Partnership to Boost Arrivals

Scoot, the low-cost arm of Singapore Airlines, has signed a three-year Memorandum of Collaboration with Tourism Malaysia to promote Malaysia as a leading travel destination ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026. Running until August 2028, the partnership will deliver integrated marketing campaigns, co-branded promotions, digital outreach, and familiarisation trips to strengthen Malaysia's tourism visibility.

The initiative will target high-potential regional markets including Australia, China, Indonesia, and Singapore. Scoot operates 115 weekly flights to 11 Malaysian cities and will add Kota Bharu to its network on October 26, 2025, expanding its coverage to 12 destinations. Tourism Malaysia Director General Datuk Manoharan Periasamy said the collaboration is timely, as international arrivals reached 16.9 million in the first five months of 2025, up 20.4% year-on-year, with Singapore leading as the top source market.

Scoot's Director of Marketing, Communications and Loyalty, Agatha Yap, cited Malaysia's strong appeal and the ease of a 30-day visa-free stay for regional travellers.

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Business Events Seen as Key to Malaysia's Tourism Growth

Business events are vital to Malaysia's tourism targets under the 13th Malaysia Plan. Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi highlighted that business travellers are high-value visitors who bring investments, ideas, and influence, significantly benefiting the economy.

Over the past decade, Malaysia has hosted more than 3,000 business events, attracting over a million delegates and generating RM18 billion in economic impact. Foreign tourist spending is projected to reach RM102.2 billion in 2024, underscoring tourism's national importance.

To support growth, the government is simplifying visa processes, upgrading airports and convention centres, and strengthening collaboration among agencies like MACEOS, the Tourism Ministry, and the Trade Ministry. Ahmad Zahid stressed that infrastructure alone is insufficient and encouraged MACEOS to enhance its efforts to boost the sector's contribution to inclusive and sustainable development.

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AirAsia X Launches Kuala Lumpur to Istanbul Route, Eyes Global Expansion

AirAsia X, the long-haul low-cost unit of AirAsia, will begin four weekly flights from Kuala Lumpur to Istanbul's Sabiha Gokcen airport. This move follows AirAsia's tentative plan to acquire up to 70 extended-range Airbus jets, announced during Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's visit to France. The new aircraft aim to support AirAsia's expansion into Europe and North America under CEO Tony Fernandes.

The Kuala Lumpur-Istanbul route marks a key milestone, as AirAsia X had previously served London and Paris between 2009 and 2012 but withdrew due to low demand and carbon levies. The airline's network expansion shows mixed outcomes; it launched flights to Almaty, Kazakhstan, last year but will suspend Nairobi service from September due to weak demand.

This strategic focus on new international markets reflects AirAsia X's ambition to grow its long-haul presence while navigating fluctuating demand challenges.

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