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Weekly Insights

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Hilton Expands Luxury Footprint Across Southeast Asia and Malaysia

Hilton is accelerating its luxury and lifestyle expansion in Southeast Asia with three new hotel signings, including Malaysia's first Tapestry Collection by Hilton in Melaka. This marks the debut of the Tapestry brand locally and strengthens Hilton's pipeline of 17 upcoming regional projects, adding nearly 4,000 rooms. Two other signings, Conrad Hoi'An and Conrad Bangkok Sukhumvit Queen's Park, will further reinforce Hilton's presence in the region.

In Malaysia, the Tapestry Collection joins other upcoming brand entries such as Waldorf Astoria, Conrad Hotels & Resorts, and Curio Collection by Hilton. This expansion reflects Hilton's confidence in Malaysia's strong tourism recovery, with over 28 million arrivals recorded between January and August 2025 and a target of 47 million visitors in 2026.

Hilton's senior leadership highlights growing demand for high-end hospitality in Asia Pacific. With plans to expand its luxury and lifestyle portfolio by at least 50 per cent from its current 160 properties, Hilton is leveraging regional economic growth, rising affluence, and robust investor interest in hospitality assets.



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Sunway REIT Recycles Capital Through RM60 Million Hotel Disposal

Sunway Real Estate Investment Trust is divesting Sunway Hotel Seberang Jaya in Penang to its parent company, Sunway Bhd, for RM60 million as part of a strategic capital recycling plan to fund new projects in Seberang Perai. The disposal, through a conditional sale and purchase agreement with Sunway Medical Centre Penang, follows Sunway REIT's earlier acquisition of the property in 2010 for RM51.9 million. The hotel's master lease, signed in 2020 for ten years, will end once the transaction is completed.

The sale price represents a 9.1% premium to the market valuation of RM55 million, appraised in July 2025. Sunway REIT expects a disposal gain of RM4 million. Proceeds will be channelled into the construction of a new hotel above Sunway Carnival Mall, estimated at RM140 million. The disposal is classified as a related-party transaction, with completion targeted for the fourth quarter of 2027.

Beyond this, Sunway REIT is pursuing another major redevelopment at Sunway Pier in Port Klang, worth RM462 million, reinforcing its ongoing strategy of asset optimisation and sustainable portfolio growth.



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MIHAS 2025 Hits RM6.05 Billion, Strengthening Malaysia's Halal Leadership

The Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS) 2025 concluded its 21st edition with record-breaking sales of RM6.05 billion, marking a 40.7% increase from last year's RM4.3 billion. Organised by MATRADE, the event drew over 50,000 trade visitors from 107 countries and featured 2,400 booths highlighting products and services across 14 halal industry clusters under the theme "Pinnacle of Halal Excellence."

The strong performance reinforces MIHAS as the world's leading halal trade platform and showcases Malaysia's success in connecting global buyers and halal producers. Its scale and international participation reflect sustained investor confidence and growing demand for ethical, high-quality halal goods and services.

Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry Tengku Datuk Seri Utama Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz said MIHAS 2025's achievement demonstrates Malaysia's leadership in shaping a future-ready halal ecosystem. Guided by the New Industrial Master Plan 2030 and the Halal Industry Master Plan 2030, Malaysia continues to build a sustainable halal economy.



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Malaysia Strengthens Transport Innovation with Transport Expo Asia 2025

Malaysia will host the Transport Expo Asia (TXA) 2025 from Nov 11 to 13 at Sama-Sama Hotel, Kuala Lumpur International Airport. The event, hosted by the Ministry of Transport and organised by Alpine Integrated Solution, will showcase innovation and sustainability in the transport and logistics ecosystem. It aims to connect government agencies, industry players, and technology providers to advance mobility, smart infrastructure, and ESG-focused supply chains across Asia.

According to Alpine's managing director Anita Jacobson, TXA 2025 reflects Malaysia's ambition to become a regional hub for future-ready transport solutions. The Ministry of Transport has chaired multiple coordination meetings to ensure strong collaboration and seamless event execution. Major exhibitors include Aerodarat Services, FGV Holdings, FedEx Express, Batik Air, Grab Malaysia, KTM Berhad, MRT Corp, YTL Corporation, and Malaysia Airlines.

Themed "Future on the Move", TXA 2025 will also feature several key forums, including the Road Safety Congress 2025, PDRM Special Dialogue 4, TXA Forum on Aviation, Air Cargo Day, and the Maritime Forum.



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Sunway Medical Centre Ipoh Strengthens Perak's Position in Health Tourism

Sunway Healthcare Group has launched the RM430 million Sunway Medical Centre Ipoh (SMCI) within Sunway City Ipoh, marking a key milestone in northern Malaysia's healthcare growth. Officially opened by the Sultan and Raja Permaisuri of Perak, the hospital offers 165 beds, 63 consultation suites, eight operating theatres, and 24 critical care units, supported by 280 staff and 37 specialists.

Equipped with advanced technologies including PET-CT, LINAC, and 3T MRI, SMCI houses six centres of excellence covering cardiology, oncology, neurosciences, orthopaedics, women and children's health, and digestive health. Since opening in April 2025, it has served over 12,000 patients, including international visitors from Asia, Europe, and the United States, while achieving several medical firsts in Perak such as robotic surgery and advanced stroke care.

Perak Menteri Besar said the project reflects investor confidence in the state's potential. Sunway Healthcare Group also plans new tertiary hospitals in Johor, Putrajaya, Negeri Sembilan, Penang, and Kelantan.



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Malaysia Records 1.59 Million Tourist Arrivals Amid Steady Border Growth

Malaysia recorded a steady increase in foreign tourist arrivals across key entry points in the first eight months of 2025, signalling continued recovery in the tourism sector. The Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry reported a 6% rise in entries through the Thailand–Malaysia border, with 1.59 million tourists compared to 1.49 million last year. Padang Besar remained the busiest checkpoint, followed by Bukit Kayu Hitam, Rantau Panjang, and Pengkalan Kubur.

Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) registered 3.52 million foreign arrivals during the same period, up 16.4% from 3.02 million previously. Johor also showed strong momentum, with 4.83 million visitors entering through the Sultan Abu Bakar Complex, a 6.7% increase from 2024. The ministry noted that arrivals have now surpassed pre-pandemic levels, highlighting the resilience of Malaysia's tourism recovery.

Meanwhile, the Home Ministry identified 470 illegal border routes nationwide and said security agencies continue to strengthen patrols, checkpoints, and intelligence operations to ensure border integrity and safety.



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SD Guthrie Advances Carey Island as Emerging Eco-Tourism Destination

SD Guthrie Bhd's inaugural Carey Heritage Run 2025 attracted over 1,100 participants, including the public and company employees, showcasing the island's natural landscape through 21km, 10km and 5km routes. The event, held on Carey Island, highlighted its riverbanks, reforested zones and plantation trails as part of the group's eco-tourism and sustainability agenda. It also reinforced SD Guthrie's commitment to promoting wellness, biodiversity, and community engagement.

The run followed the Carey Heritage Bird Photography Competition, which documented 65 bird species, 34 of which were newly identified on the island. A follow-up event, the Carey Heritage Ride, is scheduled for Oct 26 in conjunction with National Sports Month, further strengthening the island's appeal as a nature and heritage destination.

SD Guthrie owns about 79% of Carey Island, covering 28,646 acres, and is advancing new development plans. These include a 2,000-acre industrial and logistics hub and a food security and edu-tech hub, ensuring balanced growth that integrates sustainability with economic expansion.



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Malaysia Airports Records 8% Passenger Growth Amid Expanding Connectivity

Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd recorded a robust 8% year-on-year increase in passenger movements at its domestic operations in the third quarter of 2025, handling 26.9 million passengers. Kuala Lumpur International Airport led the growth with 16.3 million movements, supported by the National Day holidays, long weekends, and the addition of new airline operations.

Traffic growth was further boosted by the entry of Jiangxi Air from China and Hong Kong Express, alongside 12 newly launched routes. Managing director Datuk Mohd Izani Ghani said Malaysia Airports continues to expand partnerships across ASEAN, South Asia, Northeast Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and the Southwest Pacific, aligning with national efforts to promote Visit Malaysia 2026.

Internationally, Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport, also managed by Malaysia Airports, recorded a 21% rise in total passengers, driven by a 26.1% increase in international traffic to 7.4 million. This consistent momentum underscores Malaysia Airports' strong network performance and strategic positioning in the global aviation recovery.



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AirAsia Expands Regional Connectivity with Kuala Lumpur–Banjarmasin Route

AirAsia Malaysia has launched its inaugural direct service between Kuala Lumpur and Banjarmasin, marking the first scheduled international connection between Malaysia and South Kalimantan. The new route strengthens AirAsia's position as one of the most connected foreign carriers in Indonesia, serving 18 destinations, while promoting Banjarmasin's unique river culture and growing reputation as a halal-friendly destination.

The launch follows AirAsia's recognition at the 2025 World Travel Awards Asia and Oceania and Kuala Lumpur's ranking as the world's leading low-cost carrier hub by OAG. The route is expected to enhance regional travel and trade, offering passengers seamless access through AirAsia's Fly-Thru network of over 130 global destinations.

AirAsia Malaysia CEO said the expansion underscores the airline's commitment to affordable, cross-border connectivity. South Kalimantan Governor H. Muhidin added that the new link will boost the local economy, strengthen cultural ties, and attract more visitors ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026, supporting sustainable halal-linked economic growth.



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Batik Air Malaysia Expands Network and Strengthens Subang Operations

Batik Air Malaysia is seizing new growth opportunities at Subang Airport following the exit of AirAsia and Firefly's jet services. With 12 operating slots and two stationed aircraft, the airline plans to double its Subang fleet by year-end while maintaining Kuala Lumpur International Airport as its main hub. This dual-base strategy aims to diversify market reach, improve connectivity, and enhance profitability through economies of scale.

The airline is expanding aggressively, operating 52 aircraft to 63 destinations and targeting up to 85 aircraft within three years. New routes include Osaka, Makassar, and Padang, supported by partnerships with 13 global carriers such as Emirates, Qatar Airways, and KLM. CEO Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy said the airline seeks to position KLIA as a leading regional transit hub, leveraging Lion Air Group's vast network across Asia.

Despite recent challenges, Batik Air Malaysia targets profitability by 2027. The airline continues to strengthen its hybrid service model, combining affordability with flexibility, while capitalising on Malaysia's strategic position between major Asian markets.



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