

# MICE rising

## Capitalising on Iskandar Malaysia

The meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) market down south is starting to buzz with excitement. With the development of Iskandar Malaysia, which is expected to draw visitors to the state, companies located in the surrounding areas are likely to reap some benefits.

Iskandar Regional Development Authority (IRDA) chief executive Datuk Ismail Ibrahim says Iskandar could definitely be a new exciting MICE destination and provide an alternative to Kuala Lumpur. Iskandar will cover 2,000 sq km of the southernmost part of the state and feature industries such as education and tourism.

Johor is also poised to become a major theme and amusement park and shopping haven by 2014 through its integrated tourism development with projects such as Legoland and Pinewoods Iskandar Malaysia Studios. It will also be the site for the Pengerang Oil and Gas Hub, which is expected to stimulate considerable MICE activity.

Pulai Springs Resorts general manager Tengku Ahmad Faizal Tengku Mohamed is excited about the prospects that Iskandar offers. "With Iskandar, there will be many international hotel brands or chains coming up and



Different meeting formats on offer at Pulai Springs



with international marketing, global awareness of Johor as a destination will certainly increase."

In fact, he says, Iskandar will help position Johor as a major MICE destination.

Pulai Group has two companies in Johor — Pulai Springs Resort, which is tucked away in the foothills of a majestic peak, and Pulai Desaru Beach Resort & Spa, which is located near the Desaru beach.

The group has been quick to recognise the opportunities presented by the mega-development and is now working with the various authorities to capitalise on the marketing

activities and draw more business to itself.

"We are working closely with the Johor government, Johor Tourism, various tourism agencies, other corporates and leisure and MICE agencies in Johor and Singapore," Faizal adds.

The group is also extending its efforts beyond Malaysian shores, expanding business relationships with companies from Southeast Asia, Taiwan, China, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and the Middle East.

But Iskandar Malaysia is not the only development the group hopes to gain from. It is also looking forward to the completion of the Desaru

Coast Integrated Tourism Destination projects, which will have a direct impact on its resort in Desaru.

"Also fuelling the MICE industry are the developments of Desaru Coast and Mersing Laguna in eastern Johor. Desaru is poised to become a major destination for incentive groups," says IRDA's Ismail.

How does Pulai Group plan to draw MICE traffic? By offering uniquely themed packages that cater for business event groups, and by listening to its guests.

"We sell what they want us to sell, not what we want to sell," says Faizal. "This means we are very flexible

and able to meet their requirements for successful business events at our resorts."

He adds that the resorts are constantly looking to upgrade their facilities in line with the latest trends around the world. Pulai is determined that its facilities remain fresh and relevant to continue to attract the cream of the MICE crop.

This seems to be working. Pulai Springs Resorts has seen a 10% increase in MICE revenue from last year and expects to continue this upward momentum, both from its own marketing efforts as well as the benefits coming off Iskandar Malaysia. ■

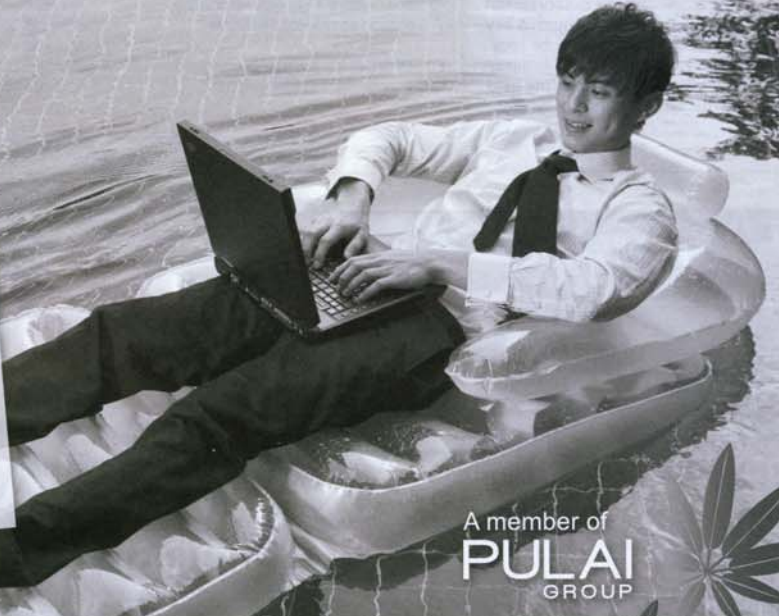
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