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Mobile shopping mall at MIEC to open in January

THE much awaited mobile, one-stop shopping mall at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre of the Langkawi International Airport will start business as early as January.

In an interview at Hotel Helang, Ekran Berhad executive chairman Tan Sri Ting Pek Khiing said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had consented to the idea when he brought it up with the latter during Lima '93.

Ting said this would prevent the MIEC being left idle at the end of the biennial Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace show.

Ting had during Lima '93 announced his intention to set up the shopping mall that would provide escalators connecting the MIEC with the Langkawi International Airport.

MIEC is managed by Woodhouse, a subsidiary of Accruvest Sdn Bhd, which had reserved 100,000 sq metres of the MIEC for duty-free outlets.

Ting said the mall would occupy an air-conditioned area of about 500,000sq feet at the MIEC where space will be leased to retailers, hawkers, convenience stores, boutiques, handicraft and batik shops, operators of a food court and duty-free shops.

"We will promote Malaysian made goods and those of Asean. But of course, certain items not available locally will be imported and sold for the benefit of tourists to the island."

He said the MIEC banquet hall would also be promoted aggressively for cultural shows and international performances from time to time.

The MIEC was originally built as the Lima exhibition centre time for Lima '91.

However, Ting's company reconstructed the renamed MIEC in 1992 at a cost of RM30 million, including two banquet and exhibition halls with a total built-up area of 200,000 sq metres.

Early this year, Ting further expanded the MIEC to three times its previous size.

"To date, we have spent about RM60 million on constructing and expanding the MIEC and I guess it is big enough to hold any show.

"If utilised properly, the MIEC can generate income to recoup the investment, rather than leave it vacant," said Ting.

The MIEC has been primarily used for the Lima series, Langkawi International Motorshow and other exhibitions like Airportex.

Answering Dr Mahathir's call for entrepreneurs to provide sufficient accommodation in Langkawi for Lima '91, Ting built properties like the De Lima Hotel and the Sheraton Langkawi Resort in record time.

For instance, in preparation for Lima '91, the 300-room first wing of the De Lima Hotel was built in five months. The hotel has since undergone expansion for Lima '93 with two other wings providing a total accommodation of 1,500 rooms.

The Sheraton in Kuah town was built in 100 days.

Hotel Helang, adjacent to the MIEC, is one of the business tycoon's stable of properties in Langkawi that was built especially in time for Lima '97.

The RM70 million, 260-room hotel was completed in five months in November and has not been opened fully yet.

But it was one of the official hotels for Lima '97 and hosted the Asian Strategic Leadership Institute's aerospace conference held concurrently

with the aerospace component of the show.

"We built Hotel Helang to cater for visitors, now that the airport can accommodate Boeing 747s, for events like Lima and for others who will find it convenient since it is adjacent to the MIEC and the airport," said Ting.

He added that he has to date invested more than RM1 billion to develop Langkawi, including RM200 million for the break-water facility to cut-off waves at the 1,000ha land facing the beach fronts of Langkasuka and De Lima hotels.

In the pipeline is a RM4billion to RM5 billion marina, the largest in Southeast Asia, that can accommodate 6,000 boats and which will be built in five years.

Ting also said the RM60 million Aqua Park would be shut down and converted into a 48-lane bowling alley.

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