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RM150m plan to make `Bintang' tourism centre

Zuraimi Abdullah

YTL Corporation Bhd yesterday unveiled a RM150 million plan to turn Bukit Bintang in Kuala Lumpur into a more prominent tourist and shopping destination.

Named "Bintang", the currently under-construction development spans a three-kilometre area from the Ritz-Carlton hotel all the way to the Lot 10 Shopping Centre.

"The name `Bintang' was chosen to be short, catchy and easy to remember. We see visitors to Kuala Lumpur as being able to easily identify areas like Bintang, Suria KLCC or Bangsar," YTL group managing director Tan Sri Francis Yeoh Seok Ping said.

"We intend to put Bintang on the tourism map, not only in Malaysia but regionally and internationally ... to create not only an exciting new attraction but a complete new lifestyle," he said. The RM150 million plan includes the more than RM100 million Ritz-Carlton Residences, luxury service apartments adjoining the existing Ritz-Carlton hotel.

The service apartments would also be linked to Starhill shopping complex, Yeoh said, adding work on the development would start within the next two months.

The Bintang area, which already houses the international-class JW Marriott Hotel and Starhill Centre, will be further developed with various alfresco dining outlets as well as convenient pedestrian walks.

YTL recently completed the purchase of the Lot 10 Shopping Centre, the JW Marriott Hotel and Starhill Centre. The company also owns the Ritz-Carlton hotel.

Yeoh said "a careful study" indicated that Bukit Bintang was a well-established downtown shopping area but the existing infrastructure was not very well-planned, thus not shopper-friendly.

"Among other draw-backs, the area had very few outdoor and night-time activities. There was no division between pedestrian and vehicular zones and little or no shelter from the weather and no unified character."

He pointed out that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was instrumental in initiating the Bintang development.

"More than 10 years ago he questioned the lack of pedestrian walkways in the city," he said.

The Prime Minister would open the Bintang development on Dec 7.

Yeoh said all the various components of the Bintang development would be completed by Dec 1.

"With a catchment potential of 400,000 people, we expect four or five times sales increase by retailers at the Bintang development than what they had last year," he said.

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