

25/09/2004

Far from the crowds

By Eddie Lee

THE Cyberview Lodge Resort and Spa is a getaway with a difference. And that's part of the reason for it being picked over others to win Fiaci Malaysia's Award of Distinction for Best Resort this year.

According to Cyberview Lodge's general manager Maleia Marsden, "this is a unique destination with a little bit of everything. We have many amenities that other resorts don't such as recreational facilities that are different - a 10,000sq ft world-class spa, a personal computer in every room with wireless fidelity (WiFi) - and, we cater to everything from corporate to wedding functions.

"Believe it or not, the resort as it was in 1998 was built in a record 98 days - just in time for the first gathering of the Multimedia Super Corridor's International Advisory Panel (IAP). It then had 46 guest rooms, a restaurant, eight meeting and banquet rooms, two lounges and 60,000sq ft of office space."

Since then, it has undergone several phases of expansion. Today, Cyberview Lodge boasts, among others, 74 rooms - from presidential and honeymoon suites to junior suites - 68 chalets, a state-of-the-art ballroom, an Italian fusion and Chinese restaurants, a nightclub and a spa, all set within a tropical ambience overlooking a tranquil lake. An ideal hideaway indeed, for body, mind and soul.

In keeping with the advancements in information technology, the resort offers a dedicated wireless broadband service at a speed of 1Mbps. The system, which can be accessed at Cyberview Lodge, the Cyberview Garden Villas serviced apartments and at the office complex, can burst up to 3 to 4Mbps on demand. The facility is complementary for guests as well as visitors.

About 90 per cent of Gardens Villas' apartments have been sold and the residents are allowed to use the resort's facilities and enjoy the same benefits as guests.

"It's a misconception to say that we're too far away or that there's nothing here," Marsden said, "though we do enjoy the privacy around here."

The Lodge has been a sort of hub for the blossoming Cyberjaya, having provided the banking and post office facilities for the community, as well as serving the headquarters of the MSC in its initial years.

Located 30 minutes from Kuala Lumpur and 25 minutes from the KL International Airport, it enjoys an average occupancy of 60 per cent. About 70 per cent of its guests come from the corporate sector while the rest are tourists.

As with all projects within the MSC, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has had a hand in the resort's development.

"Not a direct contribution per se but his influence counted," explained Marsden. "The former Prime Minister was a great inspiration to us. We kept it very Malaysian because he wanted to showcase the country and its developments.

"He suggested we shouldn't make it another typical KL hotel, with all marble and chandeliers, but go for a home-like feel. So we came up with what we call the 'Bali-kampung spirit'."

She said Dr Mahathir also wanted the resort to be lush with greenery.

"He remains our regular visitor, enjoying walks in the garden and meeting people here. And we continue to be the meeting place for the annual IAP meeting," she added.

The unique thing about Cyberview Lodge, said Marsden, is that it continues to evolve.

"There's always something we need to work on, always something we are targeting towards. And it's really exciting to see the city grow up around us. There really was nothing here when we opened in 1998."

The resort is being renovated now, with another 100 rooms to be added in stages until the later part of next year.

Since taking charge of the hotel in 1998, Marsden said, her greatest satisfaction has been its success and seeing both Cyberjaya and Putrajaya grow.

"When we first started, we were not just selling the resort but also trying to educate people about the MSC and Putrajaya. Now, everybody knows what they are. I would say our reputation is credible, and I have achieved my goal of establishing a very exclusive and successful resort," she said.

What now, then, having won the coveted Fiabci award?

"I will continue to contribute, for there are still a few things that need to be done. I will focus on these things and the city as well, for Cyberjaya is set to become a highly successful city," Marsden said.

Cyberview Lodge owner Setia Haruman Sdn Bhd is an active developer in Cyberjaya and Marsden said she wished to stay on to see some of their projects take off.

"I am glad to have worked under the guidance of two Prime Ministers," she said. "Dr Mahathir showed versatility and balance in everything he did. There is a healthy middle-class here, with small variance between the rich and poor. These are things we could not have achieved without his strong leadership."

(END)