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Old Asian hand at the helm

RICHARD Riley has been appointed Kuala Lumpur's new general manager. Having spent more than 21 years in the hospitality industry, US-born Riley has held various portfolios in Hawaii, Japan, Australia, Singapore, Mauritius, China and the Phillipines.

His association with Shangri-La group began in 1996 as the manager for award-winning Portman Shangri-La in China. His previous posting was general manager/area manager for Makati Shangri-La Hotel in Manila.

He says: "I am very comfortable in Asia and I would actually like to stay in Kuala Lumpur for at least three years - my two kids like it here too."

"Shangri-La Kuala Lumpur is just about one of the older five-star hotels in the city and I anticipate great things to come.

"We've also just recently had a major refurbishment, so are really kind of old, yet new."

As general manager, Riley says his main objective is to ensure the hotel maintains its reputation as the city's premier hotel.

In regards to the drawbacks most hotels are experiencing currently, the fluent Mandarin speaker says the worst is over for hoteliers.

"We are looking at a 60 to 70 per cent occupancy rate these days and we are very glad. Although I've been here for only two weeks, I've met the King and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at functions held at the hotel," he says.

"With all these going on, I can see only good things are to come our way."