

Big MICE boost for Sandakan



Musa doing the hand print to mark the grand opening of Four Points by Sheraton Sandakan Hotel and the Harbour Mall Sandakan.

By Winnie Kasmir

SANDAKAN: The facilities within the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel and Harbour Mall create a conducive environment for a variety of economic and tourism sectors, and makes the Hotel a location for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conference and Exhibitions) here, said Datuk Seri Musa Aman.

Speaking at the grand opening of Four Points by Sheraton Sandakan Hotel and the Harbour Mall Sandakan on Saturday night, the Chief Minister said the opening of the Hotel is timely in view of the strong growth in tourism and investment in the state.

"As Sabah continues to grow as a popular tourist destination, I am confident that tourist arrival figures will continue to increase in the years to come and this also means more hotel rooms are needed to accommodate the increasing number of visitors," he said.

Musa believed that the hospitality and property sectors will continue to significantly contribute to the state's economy while giving more attractive returns for investments to developers.

"In this context, the Government will continue to support and provide incentives in order to generate more vigorous growth in the hospitality, property and tourism sectors.

"Therefore it is important for there to be close cooperation between the Government and private sector, which is in line with our emphasis and commitment to be a pro-business government and our approach towards the private sector as our partner," Musa said.

The Chief Minister also urged

hotel operators and commercial property developers to be mindful of the need to reduce their carbon footprint.

"As you all know, Sabah is known for its biodiversity, clean environment and nature based destinations, Sandakan too is known as a gateway to Sabah's nature, hence please strive to maintain the cleanliness and aesthetic elements of your premises," he said.

The hotel and mall form part of Sandakan Harbour Square, an integrated master plan development with a Gross Development Value (GDV) of approximately RM510 million.

The urban renewal project which won the Asia Pacific Property Awards 2009 on Commercial Redevelopment category also consists of a central market (market and fish jetty), town square and waterfront esplanade (for community events), Swiss Inn Waterfront Hotel, as well as commercial shop offices.

The opening ceremony was also attended by Minister of Industrial Development, Datuk Raymond Tan Shu Kiah; President of Sandakan Municipal Council, Datuk Ir James Wong; Chairman of Aseana Properties Limited, Datuk Mohammed Azlan Bin Hashim; Director of Aseana Properties Limited, Datuk Seri Ismail Bin Shahudin; Managing Director of Ireka Corporation Berhad, Lai Siew Wah and Managing Director of ICSD Ventures Sdn Bhd, Lai Voon Hon.

Meanwhile, Lai Siew Wah said the official opening of the Four Points by Sheraton Sandakan and

Harbour Mall Sandakan are the last jewels in the development of the Sandakan Harbour Square project.

"For those who remember the town centre before the Sandakan Harbour Square, will see the huge transformation that this project has brought to Sandakan in terms of social, economic and cultural impact.

"Gone are the days when the town centre was an unwanted backwater in the night where people did not feel safe to walk about.

"There were no restaurants, no shops along the harbour front or promenade to admire the beautiful sunsets over Sandakan Bay," he said.

As for now, Lai said that Sandakan Harbour Square is vibrant from morning to night and the Town Square has already been the venue for many public functions.

"Our task as developers is now more or less complete with the opening of the Hotel and Mall and I personally believe that Sandakan Harbour Square has only just begun to come alive as Sandakan's new town centre.

"Over the coming months, we will see more international brands and exciting restaurants, coming to the shopping mall and more public performances, festivals or so forth being hosted in the public square," Lai added.

Lai also announced that the Town Square will also eventually house a beautiful piece of art sculpture which was commissioned after a winning entry from a nationwide art competition this year.