

Bullish outlook for Aloft Sentral

THE Aloft Kuala Lumpur Sentral, now open, expects occupancy rate of some 65% in the first full year of operations.

General manager Paolo Campillo said the 482-room hotel will be different from other hotels within the KL Sentral, Malaysia's largest transport and transit hub. "At the Aloft, we don't wear ties, we don't have name tags, and we don't have uniforms. You need to introduce yourself to the customers to engage with them."

Campillo said Aloft's casual theme could also be seen at the Nook café, where the waiters were dressed casually in a green shirt and white pants, and at the buffet table, guests were encouraged to specify the

kind of "diet" they wanted.

Ireka Development Management Sdn Bhd president and chief executive officer Lai Voon Hon said the hotel took three years to build and was "within the budget".

The hotel project is developed by Aseana Properties Ltd (ASPL) and managed by Ireka Development.

Lai said the hotel cost RM300 million and he hoped the return on investment will be "as quick as possible" due to its prime location. "For this hotel, we are looking at below 10 years. Judging from the response that we received before we open, I think the convention hall and ballroom will do very well."

ASPL chairman Datuk Mo-

hammed Azlan Hashim said the hotel will complement the city's hospitality industry with its dynamic blend of decor, music, design and technology.

He said a plus factor for the hotel will be the Nu Sentral Shopping Complex, due for completion by year-end. "There is an air-conditioned bridge that connects directly to the Nu Sentral shopping complex from the first floor of the hotel, just next to the Nook cafe."

Starwood South-East Asia regional vice president Chuck Abbott said Malaysia was picked to site the largest Aloft hotel in the world because there is a high demand for hotel rooms in the city. "In Asia, there is a demand for more Aloft rooms,

and this is how it became the largest in the world at this moment in time."

He said the hotel was currently the 11th Starwood Hotels and Resorts in Malaysia, and its 11th Aloft hotel in Asia Pacific, while 30-40 more are being developed. Two more Aloft hotels in Bali and three in Jakarta are due to be opened in two to three years, he added.

Starwood Hotels and Resorts has 1,100 hotels in over 100 countries. To date, it has 200 hotels in Asia-Pacific, with another 140 in development.

"So we will probably double the size of our footprint within Asia-Pacific in the next three to five years," he said.

— Bernama