

The Westin sees changes

By VASANTHA GANESAN

THE Westin Kuala Lumpur Hotel & Residences, which turns two this September, will initiate some changes over the next three months that could help the hotel reach its RM72 million revenue target in the current year ending December 31 2005.

This would represent a 27 per cent revenue increase over the RM58 million chalked up last year.

The hotel's revenue is also expected to receive a boost from a higher occupancy rate and better average room rate (ARR) this year.

"Our planned average occupancy rate is 72 per cent at an ARR of RM305 per night. Last year, our average occupancy was 65 per cent at an ARR of RM285 per night," general manager Martin B. Jones said.

Jones, who was made general manager of the hotel a month ago, said The Westin's ARR will be up by 10 per cent to 15 per cent in 2006, while its occupancy will be slightly lower than 70 per cent.

"We have had a good and steady growth in net profit and we are expecting the same for the rest of the year and next year, too," he told Business Times.

Seventy per cent of The Westin's occupancy is supported by corporate clients, especially from Singapore and other

South-East Asian countries.

The hotel plans to tap further the leisure market in South-East Asia, Japan, China, Europe and Eastern Europe.

Unlike many other hotels which bank their performances on the West Asian crowd that comes to Malaysia in the July to September period, The Westin only accepts "so much" business from the Arab countries so that it can continue to sell function rooms for its corporate clients.

"The Arab crowd is not our main focus ... (nevertheless) we try to make them happy," Jones who has worked in the Dubai and Oman previously said.

"This summer, The Westin will be flying in a chef from Lebanon to cater to the Arab crowd. The hotel has already prepared Arabic-speaking personnel and is preparing its menu in Arabic," Jones told Business Times.

Of its total revenue, 60 per cent comes from its rooms while the remaining is from its food and beverage segment.

Among the things that The Westin has planned to do is to distinguish itself from the other hotels by reducing the prices on its menu and improving the ambience at its restaurant to attract more local crowd.

The hotel will also be opening a Thalgo Spa at the end of July.



CUSTOMER BOOST: Jones in The Westin's kitchen. The Westin will be reducing the prices on its menu and improving the ambience of its restaurant