

Mutiara to be rebranded, extensively refurbished

SEVENTEEN year-old Mutiara Beach Resort Penang, which will be rebranded as InterContinental Resort Penang, will be closed for a year after the Chinese New Year celebrations, at the end of the month.

The hotel, owned by Tradewinds Corp Bhd, will undergo a RM60 million refurbishment, in line with the standards required by an InterContinental.

"The hotel will close completely, post Chinese New Year...probably next Wednesday," the InterContinental Hotels Group's area director of sales and marketing (Malaysia) Bruce Ryde said.

"We are hoping to get the hotel reopened by the first quarter of 2007," Ryde told Business Times in a telephone interview.

"The hotel will have an innovative food and beverage facility, a spa, premium meeting facility ... the final direction is a deluxe product," he said.

Ryde said that the hotel's focus on the meeting, incentive, convention and exhibition market will be even stronger once the hotel reopens.

"We will have a good meeting facility, (that will be) more elaborate than what is available now," he said.

Located in Teluk Bahang, the hotel's target market includes tourists.

The renovation will see the number of rooms reduced slightly from the 438 rooms

now. Occupancy at the hotel is expected to improve "substantially" from about 60 per cent in 2005.

The InterContinental Hotels Group manages hotels under the InterContinental, Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn names.

Apart from managing the 563-room Crowne Plaza Mutiara Kuala Lumpur for Tradewinds, the group is also working on a 299-room US\$97 million (RM364 million) InterContinental Hotel project in Hanoi, Vietnam.

In October 2005, the group took over the management of Pan Pacific Glenmarie. The hotel, owned by DRB-HICOM's 70 per cent subsidiary, has been renamed Holiday Inn Glenmarie.

InterContinental Hotels Group will also be managing a new 250 to 270-room hotel under the Holiday Inn brand in Malacca. The hotel is expected to commence operations in late 2007.

The hotel is being developed by Hean-Yi Holding Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Singapore-based Kienta Group of Companies, which has investments in China, Malaysia and Indonesia.

There are three other Holiday Inns and one Crowne Plaza in Sarawak, which the group operates for Sarawak Development Corp. — *By Vasantha Ganesan*



LUXURIOUS: Front view of the Mutiara Beach Resort Penang. The hotel will be reopened by the first quarter of 2007