

Hotel Istana rebrands as business class hotel

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KUALA LUMPUR: Hotel Istana Kuala Lumpur will reposition itself as a business class hotel on completion of its RM25mil renovation and refurbishment by next month.

The exercise, which began in October last year, would allow the hotel to set more competitive rates and expand its market segments, said general manager Anthony O'Neill.

"It allows us to spread our wings a little bit more and the future of Hotel Istana is more open.

"Next year is a new era for us as competition becomes highly fierce, and I do not want the hotel to be left out. Besides, our location is to die for," he told *StarBiz* in an interview.

Currently, the ratio of leisure against corporate guests is about 50:50.

"We hope to increase the leisure travellers portion to 60%, with the remainder from corporate guests," O'Neill said. To increase guests from the leisure segment, Hotel Istana's strategy is to broaden its range by attracting travellers from countries



Hotel Istana to complete renovation by next month

that are relatively new to the hotel.

"I think the Baltic countries are very interesting markets to work with. We also want to focus on Japan and South Korea and the mass markets in China and India.

"We want to get back into the market in a determined way and use all avenues ranging from e-marketing promotions, and better representation abroad to offering good packages from our marketing side," he added.

O'Neill added that it was timely for Hotel Istana to undergo changes because of new developments in the city. The hotel turned 14 last month.

"The new ideas and concepts must fit into the majesty of a very well known name. Hotel Istana must return to its regal association, present itself in an interesting way and stay close to its Malay heritage," he said.

Renovation at the lobby and coffee house has been completed. Hotel Istana will also introduce two new restaurants serving North Indian and modern Australian cuisine to replace a nightclub and Italian restaurant respectively.

"We have completed refurbishment on 217 rooms, by turning them into modern stylised rooms. Last month, we began renovation on another 242 rooms," he added.

O'Neill said the hotel's average occupancy rate had been consistently in the mid-50% for some time but he expected that to improve after the renovation.

Hotel Istana is owned and operated by Bursa Malaysia-listed Tradewinds Corp Bhd.