

Headline	SP Setia refreshes Penang aquatic centre
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By Chris Prasad

GEORGE TOWN — A five-year plan to revamp the Penang Indoor Sports Arena (PISA) and its aquatic centre has now come to fruition with the official opening of the redubbed and reinvented Setia SPICE Aquatic Centre.

The “spiced-up” aquatic centre is the result of a public-private partnership between the Penang Municipal Council (now the Penang Island City Council) and leading property developer SP Setia Bhd in 2011. The task was to revamp the existing facilities at the centre as well as introduce three more components to the project: a convention centre, a hotel and retail outlets.

The opening ceremony of the revived centre, held late last week, was officiated by Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng and witnessed by Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Rashid Hasnon, Penang Mayor Datuk Patahiyah Ismail and various other state exco members.

According to acting president and chief executive officer of SP Setia Datuk Khor Chap Jen, in return for its part in the refurbishment of existing facilities and the construction of fresh components, SP Setia has been granted a 30-year concession by the council to operate and manage the Subterranean Penang International Convention and Exhibition Centre (SPICE) once it is completed.

“As Penang flourishes into an international business hub, there is a need for international convention centres of this scale to cater to MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions) activities of larger scale which the former PISA building was not able to provide,” Khor said.

He said with its strategic location, situated within proximity of the Penang International Airport and surrounded by major roads with easy access to the first and second Penang bridge, the refurbishment and enhancement of PISA – from a sports centre to a major retail, hospitality and convention hub – has increased the

service offering and the value of the site tremendously.

The convention centre, Khor said, is designed to host large scale events of up to 400 banquet tables and boast a sprawling six-acre green rooftop where the public can walk, jog and exercise. It is targeted to be operational by 2017.

In terms of sports facilities, the refurbished Setia SPICE Aquatic Centre will feature an Olympic-size swimming pool and diving pool, children’s water theme park, badminton and squash courts, function rooms, cafés, a sports clinic and a swimming school. It will also include a gymnasium soon.

The former indoor stadium at PISA has also been extensively refurbished with upgrades that include a roof replacement, a facelift and new lighting for the façade, renovation of interior spaces, air-conditioning upgrades, chiller installation and a new security and surveillance system. It now has a maximum capacity of 10,000 people.

Among the new additions is the Setia SPICE Canopy which consists of 59 retail and F&B outlets with a total lettable floor area of 98,000sq ft. This was officially opened to the public in December last year.

The final component of the development will be a 25-storey, 453-room business class hotel. According to SP Setia, construction of the hotel will commence soon after approvals have been received from the relevant authorities. The targeted opening date is 2019.

Known for being an eco-developer, SP Setia said the aquatic centre and the SPICE canopy will be utilising a RM4-million solar photovoltaic system to generate 980MWh (megawatt hour) of solar power per year. It is the largest commercial solar photovoltaic farm in Penang and it will help pare down the development’s electricity consumption considerably.

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The Setia SPICE Aquatic Centre will include an Olympic-size swimming pool, diving pool and a children's water theme park, among other facilities.