

## Dato' Zaharah Salmat Chief Executive Officer, Marina Putrajaya Sdn. Bhd.



As the CEO of Marina Putrajaya Sdn. Bhd. (MPSB), what are the prospects for the company 2017? What are MPSB's targets in 2017?

In reducing Perbadanan Putrajaya's (PPj) maintenance costs and increasing its income, the management of PPj took over the management of Cruise Tasik Putrajaya (CTP) in 2013 and parked it under its subsidiary, i.e. Marina Putrajaya Sdn. Bhd. (MPSB). Since then, MPSB has successfully tripled the revenue of CTP and managed to reduce almost 30% of its operational and maintenance cost without jeopardising its service quality.

Based on that achievement, MPSB was further tasked to manage and operate Marina Putrajaya (MP), a family sports & leisure tourism attraction in January 2014; Pusat Rekreasi Air Putrajaya (PRAP), an ecotourism attraction in April 2014; and Kompleks Sukan Air Presint 6 (KOSA), another family sports & leisure tourism attraction in February 2016. In May 2015, MPSB collaborated with Skyride Worldwide Sdn. Bhd. to operate Putrajaya Skyrides Festival Park (Skyrides), which holds the Malaysia Book of Record for the first and largest tethered balloon in Malaysia. The company now has expanded from managing only water-related attractions to land and aerial attractions as well. With these tourists attractions at hand, the

prospect for MPSB in 2017 is limitless. Thus, we are targeting to increase our revenue to more than 30% in 2017 compared to 2016. The tremendous hike on our target is to challenge ourselves so that we can become better in offering attractive products and packages to customers. In order to achieve its target, MPSB will further widen its prospects while banking on the CTP and MP since these two attractions are already popular among tourists, including residents of Putrajaya and its surroundings.

What new offerings can the public expect from MPSB in 2017?

Public can expect more excitement in terms of new products and attractive packages. We are in the midst of planning to add a new pontoon boat that offers a different experience while cruising on Putrajaya Lake. Besides, we are also planning to open another jetty in Cyberjaya to increase the number of ridership from the multimedia super corridor area and its surroundings. For Marina Putrajaya, MPSB and its joint venture company Bora Ombak has embarked on a unique and appealing offerings such as Indus Café and Wedding Halls. The café not only serves sumptuous and a wide range of dining menu but it also offers a superb dining ambience with light entertainment and magnificent view of Putrajaya Lake. Likewise, the wedding halls also

offer attractive options, including honeymoon packages.

We are also negotiating with another joint venture company to introduce a mini water theme park in Marina Putrajaya.

In sports tourism, Marina Putrajaya seeks to become the centre of excellence in canoeing whereby canoeists from all over the world will converge and use its facilities during winter.

MPSB and another joint venture company Aerolomba (the organiser of the renowned Red Bull International Air Race Championship 2015) is collaborating to develop a Remote Control (RC) Track, Drone Competition Track and air strips/mini runways related services at Kompleks Sukan Air Putrajaya. Although it has just opened to the public since January 2017, the complex has attracted thousands of RC and drone enthusiasts. MPSB also has earmarked Kompleks Sukan Air Putrajaya to become the meeting place for youths, whom we call hipsters.

As for Pusat Rekreasi Air Putrajaya, MPSB will further develop the area to become the centre for outdoor activities among school goers and students of higher learning institutions. The place will also be equipped with camping facilities and other water-based activities.



"Since PPj took over Cruise Tasik Putrajaya (CTP) in 2013 and parked it under Marina Putrajaya Sdn. Bhd., CTP's revenue has been tripled and cost reduced almost 30% without jeopardising service quality"

How did MPSB perform in 2016? Did MPSB experience increase in terms of the number of customers and sales compared to the previous year?

Despite the economic slowdown and unpredictable weather, we managed to improve our financial performance in 2016. Surprisingly, we chalked up nearly 20% increase in the number of international tourists. I strongly believe that this is due to our aggressive marketing and selling missions abroad. Our travel agency partners are also satisfied with our service, therefore they bring in more tourists.

To further increase the number of tourist arrivals, we will continue to invest in advertising and promotion to create more awareness among the Indian, Arabian, Singaporean, Chinese, Indonesian and European markets. This also includes participation in International Tourism Fairs to make our presence felt and provide first-hand information to our potential customers.

Looking at the trends and business conditions from 2015 until today, what are the challenges that MPSB has been facing and how has the company successfully overcome them?

### Good governance

Being the focus of attractions in Putrajaya and winning the customers' trust is not easy. During the taking over period, nothing much has been developed especially in terms of Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) and manuals.

As an integral part of good governance, MPSB has to painstakingly develop its own SOPs and manuals from scratch for all aspects of governance such as administration, finance, human resource, operation, business planning and development, among other.

### Competency

When taking over, MPSB decided to continue the services of the existing staff. Unfortunately, most of them have not being trained or possess the right competencies in hospitality or tourism. The company doesn't have enough allocation for training, therefore we rely heavily on free of charge training programmes, Training-the-Trainers and in-house training/campaign schemes.

To expedite and motivate the development of competency among staff, MPSB has introduced incentives and acknowledgement schemes such as The Best of The Month Award, The Best Department Award, The Best Head of Department Award and The Top Sales Person Award.

### Understanding market needs

As a newly established company, MPSB does not have ample database for decision-making, especially in operations, services, and business planning and development.

As a response, MPSB has to spend a lot of time and resources conducting research and studies, including database gathering to understand the market needs in depth, besides understanding the business' strengths, weaknesses, prospects and threats.