

For Immediate Release

Millennium Mitsui Garden Hotel reports strong performance

Singapore, 29 April 2015 -- Millennium Mitsui Garden Hotel Tokyo has put in a scintillating performance in its first 4 months of operations, testifying to foresight and the uncanny timing of the investment by its owner, Millennium & Copthorne Hotels (M&C) Chairman Mr Kwek Leng Beng.

The new 329-room hotel, built on the site in the heart of Ginza 4-Chome District, the famous entertainment-shopping precinct, opened last December. Since then it has been consistently enjoying over 80 per cent average occupancy rate and room rates are also rising, said Mr Kwek.

“The performance is beyond expectations as a new hotel usually takes up to two years to have stable earnings and service performance,” he said.

M&C had been trying to gain a presence in Tokyo since the mid-1990s and securing a presence in Ginza was nearly impossible. There was a strong negative outlook with Japan’s decades-long low growth.

“But when the opportunity arose to buy a site in Ginza and to build a new hotel, I grabbed it,” said Mr Kwek who is also Executive Chairman of City Developments Limited (CDL), which has a controlling 61.4 per cent stake in M&C.

The ¥9.5 billion buy (S\$104.5 million) in 2011 turned out to be a prized one as the hotel is now the ‘star’ on the Ginza strip, other hotels being smaller, older or converted from commercial buildings. Also, the completion of the M&C owned hotel – its first M&C flagship property in Japan - proved Mr Kwek’s keen sense of timing.

By the time the hotel’s construction was completed, Japan had shaken off the gloom that followed the 2011 Fukushima nuclear plant disaster. Tokyo has also been upbeat after being selected as host for the 2020 Olympics, knowing the fame and a tourist boom would likely follow.

Also, the fall in the value of the Yen and moves by the Japanese Government to ease travel entry for visitors are among major factors that have contributed to a turnaround. The premiership of Prime Minister Mr Shinzo Abe, who has promised economic recovery, added to the list of positive factors.

Mr Kwek was making the remarks after a team from Mitsui Fudosan Hotels Division paid him a courtesy visit and had a chance to review the hotel’s operations yesterday. Mitsui is a lessee of the M&C hotel and was agreeable to co-brand with M&C and to create a marketing alliance. London-listed M&C brings to the table a new stream of hotel customers from Europe and the United States where it has significant hotel operations and international experience, adding to Mitsui’s strengths in Asian markets.

“Mitsui Fudosan, our long time business associate, has given invaluable help in securing the land and helping to build this brand new hotel,” said Mr Kwek.

The visiting Japanese team included Ms Ayako Iwasaki, General Manager of Millennium Mitsui Garden, who said the seven types of rooms of the hotel cost US\$220 (S\$290.55) upwards per night during peak periods. “We hope to keep up this tempo and see more Singaporeans visit Tokyo, not only for business but for holiday,” she said.

Ms Iwasaki said on some days her hotel was fully booked. Leisure guests make up 70 per cent of its guest list, the rest being business travellers. Chinese and Taiwanese guests make up the biggest block of foreign guests with Americans and other Asians making up the rest. The Hotel enjoys strong support too from domestic travellers.

The hotel is at the heart of Ginza, opposite from the famous Mitsukoshi department store, the Kabuki-za Theatre, food, entertainment and luxury brands, household appliances, all within walking distance. Buildings like the Millennium Mitsui Garden Hotel are restricted in height to a maximum 14 floors so as to blend in with historic character of Ginza which enjoys a 24 hour buzz, an attraction to Japanese and foreigners alike.

“We want to attract more visitors from this region even as we see an increase in guests from China, Taiwan and South Korea,” said Ms Iwasaki, who has 17 years hotel experience under her belt, and is the first and only female General Manager of the Japanese Group.

“While the outlook is strong, we will continue to push to improve our hotels’ services and our language facilities to accommodate the different people staying with us. Our group plans to deepen links with M&C with its international reach, experience and systems,” she said.

Last week the hotel added another accolade: it found it had clinched an international interior design award by US-based International Design Awards (IDA). “It was a big surprise and will give my team a boost in confidence after the hectic opening period. This will help give us an edge over other hotels in Ginza,” said Ms Iwasaki.

The design approach to Millennium Mitsui Garden was Asian Minimalism with the aim to create a private garden in the heart of the city, like a Japanese Zen garden. Lighting, touch, texture, comfort, art and the environment, are all considered carefully in the development of the design concept.

Landscape stairs connect the lobby to the restaurant at the lower ground level, where a relaxed library with an atmosphere of a greenhouse creates a comfortable dining experience in the city. The typical guestroom averaging 200-sq.ft is spacious and efficiently designed for comfort while larger rooms are about 350-sq.ft in size.

Rooms come with full amenities that include a four-piece bathroom and an independent toilet space. Large mural artwork and special carpet design complete the idea of the private garden in the guestrooms. “We are confident that its modern Japanese and Western design blend will attract our guests,” she added.

The IDA annual awards, now in its 8th year, will be held on 4 May 2015 at the Harmony Gold Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles.

Both CDL and M&C are members of the Hong Leong Group of companies.

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