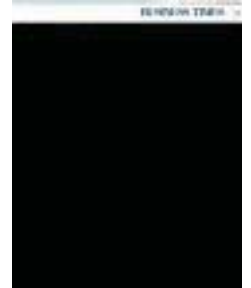


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RM25 MILLION CAPEX

AEON BiG eyes expansion

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AEON BiG (M) Sdn Bhd has provisioned RM25 million as capital expenditure (capex) for the year to refurbish, market and expand its hypermarket network.

AEON BiG Managing Director Sheikh Farouk Sheikh Mohamed said the allocation would primarily be for refurbishing existing stores, ensuring maintenance to enhance customer experience, and supporting store expansion plans.

Sheikh Farouk said AEON BiG aims to identify new locations for store expansion, further solidifying its presence in the market.

"New stores are in our plans, but we cannot reveal the location. We are just looking for the right time to announce them.

"We also plan to continue our ongoing refurbishment efforts across all 21 stores in Peninsular Malaysia, concentrating on enhancing facilities for an improved customer experience," he told the *Business Times* in an interview.

Transforming customer transactions

In a notable stride towards technological advancement, AEON BiG has invested in cutting-edge technology, introducing a self-checkout system at its stores.

Although adoption rate was slow at first, Sheikh Farouk said more and more consumers are using self-checkout services now.

"At the beginning, this change experienced resistance. However, I have seen consumers progressively taking to self-checkout.

"Now, about 30 per cent of our customer transactions are based on self-checkout services. Therefore, from this we target to go at

least 50 per cent [of consumer transactions from self-checkout] by the end of this year."

More collaborations this year

Sheikh Farouk said these collaborations extend beyond the sports segment, encompassing partnerships with various industries.

"For the hypermarket segment, sports will definitely be our focus this year. Another area of focus will be our grocery segment. The others are baby world, leasing and food and beverage (F&B)," he said.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Farouk said AEON BiG aims to strike a balance in its leasing partner segment, focusing on creating a well-rounded mix within its malls.

The company envisions a diverse selection of F&B, entertainment, sports, apparel, and services stores to establish its malls as comprehensive one-stop centres for customers.

"We will find the balance in our leasing partner segment. What we need in our malls are more F&B, entertainment, sports, apparel and services stores.

"Those will be our focus for leasing. We want to make our leasing more balanced, especially, to become a one stop centre for customers."

Commitment to price stability

In a resolute stance against the prevailing challenges in the market, AEON BiG affirms its commitment to maintaining current pricing structures, demonstrating unwavering support for its customer base.

Since last year, Sheikh Farouk said the hypermarket chain has steadfastly held its prices and engaged in collaborative initiatives, such as *Jualan Rahmah*, to ensure affordability for its diverse cus-



AEON BiG Managing Director Sheikh Farouk Sheikh Mohamed (second from left) with Original Classic Managing Director Datuk YK Chin and Original Classic Chief Executive Officer Chin Yun Hsin, and AEON BiG Head of Leasing Dajmalina Zolkpli (left) during a signing ceremony at AEON BiG Wangsa Maju. PIC BY AZIAH AZMEE

tomor profile.

"Recognising the sensitivity of our customer profile, primarily consisting of B40 and M40 segments, AEON BiG acknowledges the importance of pricing stability.

"We understand the unique needs of our customer base. Rather than contemplating price increases, we dedicated ourselves to negotiating more favourable terms with suppliers."

Leading sustainability initiatives

AEON BiG Wangsa Maju serves as a model for sustainable practices within the AEON BiG network.

Sheikh Farouk said the integration of solar panels, electric vehicle (EV) charging, and the drive-thru recycling centre at this location is a precursor to the company's commitment to expanding these initiatives to all of its stores by the end of the year.

"AEON BiG Wangsa Maju has set a precedent by installing solar panels on our rooftop.

"In collaboration with Tenaga Nasional Bhd and its subsidiary, GSPARX Sdn Bhd, we aim to equip all 15 malls with solar panels by the mid-point of this year.

"This initiative has resulted in substantial energy savings, ranging from 15 to 20 per cent."

In addition, Sheikh Farouk said AEON BiG has installed EV charging



Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) President Datuk Hamidin Mohd Amin (second from left) and AEON CO (M) Bhd Independent Non-Executive Chairman Datuk Iskandar Sarudin holding up a framed jersey at AEON BiG Wangsa Maju on Aug 31, 2023. With them are AEON BiG Managing Director Sheikh Farouk Sheikh Mohamed (right) and FAM General Secretary Datuk Azman Rahman (left). PIC BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI

infrastructure at its malls, promoting sustainable commuting and supporting the growing demand for EV usage.

This forward-looking move underscores the company's commitment to environmental responsibility and community needs, he added.

Moving forward, Sheikh Farouk said AEON BiG anticipates a con-

siderable boost in footfall and tenant numbers within its malls this year, signaling a positive shift in consumer confidence and business resilience.

"This influx extends across various sectors, including F&B, apparel and services, indicating a prevailing confidence among businesses to establish a presence within AEON BiG retail spaces."



AEON BiG patrons at the reopening of AEON BiG Midvalley Megamall.