

# A BEACON OF HISTORY AND MODERNISATION

## **Merdeka 118 – A New Icon in Kuala Lumpur**

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PICTURE COURTESY OF PNB MERDEKA VENTURES SDN. BHD

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If you're a KL-ite, you've probably passed by the Merdeka 118 tower, centred at the heart of the city, on the site of the former Merdeka Park. Towering at 118 storeys with a completed height of 644 meters, it is the tallest building in Malaysia and will rank the second tallest in the world, after the Burj Khalifa upon completion. PNB Merdeka Ventures Sdn. Berhad (PMVSB), the builder and owner of the Merdeka 118 development is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB), one of Malaysia's leading investment firms. This development ranks in a league of ambitious, new engineering wonders that are bigger and more advanced than anything constructed before.







Artist impression of the completed Merdeka 118 Tower gracing the KL skyline



Stadium Merdeka



Stadium Negara

**LOCATION**

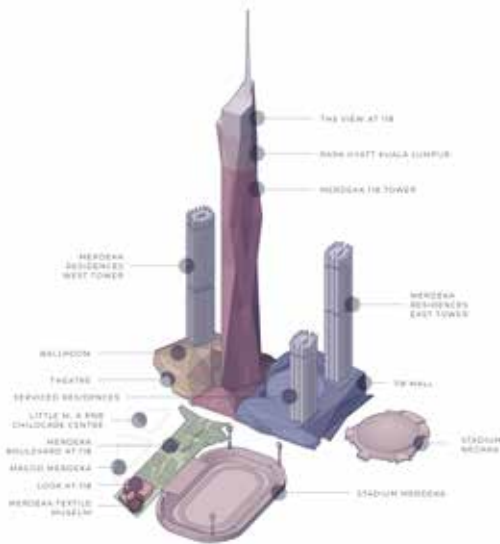
The Merdeka 118 tower sits adjacent to two national heritage sites, Stadium Merdeka and Stadium Negara, which feeds into its official name. The design of the building is inspired by the silhouette of Tunku Abdul Rahman’s, Malaysia’s first Prime Minister’s iconic hand-raise while chanting ‘Merdeka’ seven times back in Aug 31, 1957, when he declared the nation’s independence in Stadium Merdeka. Overlooking Stadium Merdeka, the tower symbolises the union of the historic and contemporary. It will be the new focal point in the distinctive skyline of Malaysia’s capital city.

**CONSERVATION EFFORTS**

There was a misconception that Stadium Merdeka and Stadium Negara were demolished to make way for the Merdeka 118 development. On the contrary, PNB has in fact conserved the two historic landmarks and is committed to ensuring this site is preserved for future generations. Therefore, meticulous conservation efforts have been carried out, earning Stadium Merdeka the UNESCO Award of Excellence for Culture Heritage Conservation Programme in 2008.

As the custodian of Stadium Merdeka, its main preservation efforts have been the restoration of Stadium Merdeka to its former state in 1957. PNB has collaborated with Badan Warisan Malaysia and Jabatan Warisan Negara (JWN) to ensure that stadium is restored and improved without compromising on its conservation whilst retaining its authenticity.

Stadium Negara is being studied closely so that it can be revived as Malaysia’s first indoor stadium into a world-class venue for indoor sports/entertainment events and concerts in the near future.



Precinct Diagram



Merdeka Boulevard at 118

**ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN**

Diving into the makeup of this stunning tower, 189,672 cubic metres of concrete interwoven with over 36,000 tonnes of structural steel make up its intricate, geometric structure. At the tower’s base, sits a showpiece office lobby. Inside, a steel and glass atrium rising 171 metres high. Outside, approximately 18,000 panes of glass cover its crystalline façade. There are 8.4 kilometres of LED lights running along the diamond edge of the tower’s exterior, illuminating the skyline – a revolutionary skyscraper. The Merdeka 118 tower’s multi-faceted façade resembles different cuts of a diamond, representing the diversity of the people in Malaysia.

The design behind this stunning building is Fender Katsalidis (FKA), a Melbourne-based architectural firm. It is best known as the brains behind Eureka Tower – the tallest building in Melbourne. RSP Architects is the Malaysian architect firm working alongside FKA.

In view of Malaysia’s commitment to having sustainable buildings, the tower aspires to be a model for workplace safety and sustainability. The Merdeka 118 tower is pursuing a rigorous environmental program and is seeking triple green platinum sustainability accreditations under the U.S. Green Building Council’s (USGBC) Leadership in Environmental Engineering Design (LEED), the Malaysian Green Building Index, and the Malaysian GreenRE certifications. It will become the first building to work towards achieving triple green platinum certifications in Malaysia.

**SAFETY TAKEN TO NEW HEIGHTS**

Accounting for almost a quarter of the tower’s height is the intrinsically slender spire which is subjected to vibration due to wind load. To minimise the vibration, a 3D space truss framing has been employed and its wind load distribution has been ascertained by state-of-the-art aeroelastic wind tunnel testing. The Advanced Technology and Research team also conducted an in-depth fatigue assessment of the spire and related connections to ensure the spire structures can withstand accumulated damage from day-to-day wind events during its design lifetime.



Merdeka 118 Office and Park Hyatt Kuala Lumpur Drop-off





Look at 118

**ITS OFFERINGS**

Merdeka 118 will feature 83 floors of premium office space, while the Park Hyatt Kuala Lumpur luxury hotel will occupy the top 17 floors of this tower, with approximately 252 guestrooms and suites that are designed to embrace the unparalleled views of the city skyline. The hotel will also offer approximately 1,850 square metres of meeting space for conferences, events and the likes. Another outstanding feature is ‘The View at 118’, which will be Southeast Asia’s highest observation deck occupying Level 115 and Level 116M of the tower. Visitors will be able to reach the said deck in a glass-panelled elevator shuttling visitors up to the top in 65 seconds. It will be an inimitable experience.

The entire precinct will be completed in three phases. The first and second being the Merdeka 118 tower, the retail mall, the linear park and surrounding infrastructure, estimated to be completed in Q3 of 2022, while the final phase (the three residential towers encircling the Merdeka 118 tower) will be completed in 2025/2026. The Merdeka 118 precinct is seamlessly connected via Kuala Lumpur’s public transit network such as the Plaza Rakyat and Hang Tuah LRT, Plaza Rakyat and Maharajalela monorail and Merdeka MRT station. The retail mall will offer exciting retail opportunities with approximately 1 million sq. ft. of retail space. As a whole, the Merdeka 118 development is one of the largest projects undertaken in Malaysia.



Observation Deck



Observation Deck - Seating Area



**THE CHALLENGES**

The construction of this impressive skyscraper started steadily with the tower being 42% percent completed by October 2019 and was well underway to reach its completion target in 2020. That was, of course, until the world was struck by the COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone was confined to their homes and every industry including construction was impacted in unprecedented ways. The government mandated a Movement Control Order (MCO) and instructed the construction of the Merdeka 118 construction works to stop on March 18, 2020, when the building had reached 111 floors. But any fears of lengthy delays were lifted as work resumed on May 13, 2020. The work started under strict guidelines including temperature screening of workers and social distancing practice on site. In early August of 2020, the tower’s concrete core topped out at 118 floors surpassing Vincom Landmark 81, which is the tallest building in Southeast Asia. Work on the façade continued, reaching level 108 by July 2021. The tower is now 81% completed with the spire expected to be installed by the end of 2021. Given the current global pandemic and economic situation, there are challenging times ahead. The President and Group Chief Executive of PNB, Ahmad Zulqarnain Onn, claims that the company is in advanced negotiations with potential tenants and will continue to seek investors.



Main tower piling work - 16 August 2016



Level 23 - 1 June 2018



Level 118 - 24 June 2021