

## EVENTS

# Eastern & Oriental Celebrates Its 140th Anniversary As Malaysia's Oldest Hotel

*Alicia Corbett*  
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Penang island's crème de la crème converged at the original grande dame of Southeast Asia's luxury heritage hotels for a night of music, dancing, and fireworks.



Penang's legendary **Eastern & Oriental Hotel** was founded in 1885 by Armenian hoteliers, the Sarkies Brothers, to satisfy the wanderlust of a new influx of the well-heeled crowd, actors, and writers, who were all keen to explore the exotic East. In 1903, one of the brothers, Arshak, added a large ballroom that would become the island's social epicentre and was akin to the grand country estates where the gentry gathered. More than a century since E&O's establishment, it remains a cherished landmark hotel that has welcomed royalty such as King Charles III and other heads of state. Recently, the E&O proudly celebrated its **140th anniversary** with a **magnificent gala ball** at the hotel's stately Grand Ballroom.



The glittering occasion welcomed 250 distinguished guests of the island's upper echelon, including Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow and his wife, Tan Lean Kee; His Excellency Consul General of Japan in Penang, Machida Shinya; Vice Consul-General of the People's Republic of China in Penang, Ding Qiao; esteemed members of the Consular Corps; State EXCO members; Dato' Seri Tee Eng Ho, Executive Chairman of Eastern & Oriental Berhad; members of the board of Eastern & Oriental Berhad; industry leaders; and longtime patrons of the hotel.



Timeless classical music set the perfect tone for the evening, performed by the Totally Telemann Quartet, Musica Sinfonietta, and the Big Band of Penang. Before guests entered the ballroom, they could catch a glimpse of the hotel's storied past through mementos that survived the test of time, such as crockery likely used during the time of the Sarkies brothers, as well as a ticket to a Christmas Ball held here by the Royal Air Force Regiment in 1945.

*A SPREAD OF DELECTABLE CREATIONS*

After guests took their seats, E&O presented a specially curated menu with the number 140 creatively reflected throughout the night's offerings.



"As the current custodian of this iconic property, I am truly proud to be part of its incredible journey. Thank you all for your unwavering support and for being such an important part of our story. I look forward to working with the dedicated E&O team to ensure the enduring elegance and preeminent style of this heritage icon continue to thrive," said E&O Hotel's General Manager Alison Fraser during her welcome speech.



In his speech, Chow said: “One hundred and forty years is no small feat. It is a legacy that very few institutions in our region can claim, a legacy that belongs not only to the E&O Hotel but also to Penang itself. I must say, after spending the past week in Kuala Lumpur for a working trip, it struck me that the oldest and most iconic hotel in Malaysia is not in the capital, but right here in Penang.”



Dato' Seri Tee said during his speech: “This landmark has been a vibrant, beating heart—a part of Penang's enduring story. Tonight, we celebrate

not just the past, but we also recognise the decades of support you have all given us as we look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead.”

As the festivities drew to a close, guests, dressed in black-tie attire, glided across the dance floor as they waltzed and twirled. The evening drew to a close with a dazzling display of fireworks that illuminated the Penang sky. The lavish soiree proved that the spirit of refined hospitality of the Sarkies brothers truly lives on at the E&O.