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## Landslides and cholera two causes for drop in tourists

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Landslides and the cholera outbreak in Penang are two of the reasons for the drop in foreign visitors to Malaysia in the first six months of the year.

Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said today the tourism industry was sensitive and tourists would hesitate to visit Malaysia if such occurrences persist.

"These incidences bring about a negative effect on the industry but we cannot fail to report it because it is important. We have to keep people informed," he said after flagging off participants for a treasure hunt held in conjunction with Visit Terengganu Year 1997.

In June, a landslide occurred on a slip road leading to the popular Genting Highlands resort claiming 20 lives and injuring 22 others.

In January, a landslip at Gua Tempurung killed the co-driver of a lorry and led to the closure of the road.

The cholera epidemic (Penang) in May affected more than 1,000 people and spread to other States.

Singapore was one of the countries to record a drop in visitors to Malaysia, Sabbaruddin said, adding that the reason may have been because the country no longer participated in the Malaysia Cup football tournament.

According to figures published by the Immigration Department on Nov 23, the number of visitors in the first six months of this year dropped by 4.2 per cent to 3.46 million from 3.61 million in the same period last year.

Sabbaruddin also said the second half of the year normally saw more tourists visiting Malaysia.

Meanwhile, commenting on yesterday's accident involving a Genting Highlands transport bus which plunged into a ravine at Km4 Jalan Genting Highlands-Kuala Lumpur, injuring 27 people, Sabbaruddin said accidents were one of the reasons for the drop in visitors.

"Drivers should be more careful and the authorities should be more strict with enforcement. If a bus owner or its driver is found to have contravened the law, they should not be given a licence to operate," he said, adding the same principle should apply to taxi drivers.

He earlier flagged off 38 motorists taking part in the treasure hunt organised by M-Vision Convention and Exhibition Sdn Bhd and the Automobile Association of Malaysia.

"The treasure hunt is a good way of promoting the State in line with VTY. The Federal Government is also helping Terengganu by promoting it at our offices overseas as a tourist destination.

"We incorporate traditional dances from Terengganu in our cultural performances abroad as a way of promoting the State."

Today marked the first stage of the three-day hunt called the "Find Yourself in Terengganu Treasure Hunt" with the second stage being a mini-hunt in Terengganu.

The participants, who reached Kuala Terengganu later in the evening, will attend the official launch of VTY by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tomorrow.

In line with the objective to make Terengganu a tourist destination, the hunt will take its participants through towns and scenic places in the State.

The overall winner will receive an air ticket to France courtesy of

Emirates Airlines while the first three winners of both stages will receive cash vouchers of RM1,500, RM1,000 and RM800 respectively which is exchangeable for electrical appliances.

The first five winners will also receive a holiday package for a three-day and two-nights' stay in Kuala Terengganu.

This is part of the events scheduled throughout VTY which includes several international events like the Asia Pacific Scout Jamboree and the Asean Silat competition.

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