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Tourism-Mission

TOURIST PROMOTION MISSION TO AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND A SUCCESS

By: Sobrey Jaafar

AUCKLAND, Oct 19 (Bernama) -- Visitors to the Crown Entertainment Complex by the Yellow River in Melbourne and the Atrium concourse level on the Elliot, Auckland's top shopping complex, were pleasantly surprised when they were treated to a cultural show by able musicians and graceful dancers.

The performers, from the Malaysia's National Cultural Complex (KBN) were part of a two-week mission to promote Malaysia as a tourist destination to Australia and New Zealand.

The Malaysian Food and Cultural Festival mission to Australia and New Zealand which began on Oct 9 in Melbourne, was led by Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik.

The warm reception did not stop there. Guests at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, Melbourne and Skycity Hotel, Auckland were also treated to Malaysian cuisine prepared by four master chefs specially flown in.

The highlight of the mission were the dinner celebrations, themed "An Evening with Fascinating Malaysia", hosted by Sabbaruddin for guests made up of corporate leaders, tourists and representatives of travel agencies in both countries.

In his opening speech in Melbourne, Sabbaruddin said Australia is a major tourist market, with some 150,000 making Malaysia their tourist destination last year.

With that encouraging figure, he said Malaysia would continue to "entice" more Australians.

As for New Zealand, he cited a study which found that tourists from that country formed one of the top five countries who made Malaysia their shopping heaven, along with Japan, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia and Belgium.

Sabbaruddin said in Malaysia, the tourism industry is ranked second after the manufacturing industry, in terms of foreign revenue.

Last year saw 7.2 million arrivals, down almost three per cent, but revenue was RM11.2 billion, up 13 per cent.

Sabbaruddin said the ministry is confident of achieving a 10 per cent increase in arrivals, or 12.5 million, with revenue of RM20.8 billion by year 2,000.

To achieve this target, he said various products have been introduced while present tourist products have been improved upon.

Next year has been declared Sports and Recreation Year, with the anchor event being the 16th Commonwealth Games to be held in Kuala Lumpur.

The mission was given plenty of media attention and coverage. In both Melbourne and Auckland, Sabbaruddin was queried on the haze situation faced by the country and reports on the "war of words" between Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad with American financier George Soros.

The minister handled the queries well, explaining that the haze is no longer a problem in Malaysia and stressing that the problem was regional, afflicting not just Malaysia.

The haze was an issue among Commonwealth countries, including Australia and New Zealand, because of possible health hazards during the Commonwealth Games.

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