

More tourists 56.7.98 expected this year

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia expects more tourists this year compared to last year, Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said yesterday.

He said promotion of local tourism should be intensified to boost this and related sectors.

"A total of 6.8 million foreign tourists have come here this year.

"This is impressive compared to the 10.5 million tourists who came here the whole of last year," Sabbaruddin told reporters after attending the *Floral Parade '98*.

The parade was officially opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and is the highlight of the week-long *Flora Festival*, which has been held annually since 1991.

Sabbaruddin added that the parade should be promoted even in times of economic slowdown as it would generate revenue from tourism.

He said the festival was a good way of increasing the country's income through tourism.

He said he was pleased with yesterday's turnout by the participants.

The bands that took part included the Royal Malay Regiment military band and the Malaysian Sikh band.

The KFC float, which showed an opening lid of the famous fried chicken

cooking pot, released balloons which floated into the air.

Actress Erra Fazira, who was in the Fraser's Hill Development Corporation float, threw roses to the crowd.

The float also won the premier trophy for being the most attractive float.

Dr Mahathir later presented awards to the winners.

The Shah Alam

Municipal Council float won the special jury award. Other winners were Malaysia Airlines (special award), Penang (creative award) and City Hall (theme award).

The Penang float, which showed a huge display of animals at Penang's botanical gardens, took about 10 hours to be driven to Kuala Lumpur.

The City Hall float was preceded with a "robotic"

dance by members wearing futuristic outfits, which showed the country's aspirations to create a cyber-nation.

The floats would also make a second appearance in front of Pasar Tani, Jalan Ipoh, today and tomorrow.

The *Flora Festival '98*, which ends on Sunday, also includes fruit sales, theatre shows and flower exhibitions.