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Campaigns to boost tourism to be stepped up next year

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SEREMBAN, Sun. - Allocations for tourism promotion campaigns will be increased next year in line with the Government's efforts to boost the industry.

Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said this was in line with the call by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to all States to increase efforts in promoting this sector.

He said a special meeting chaired by Dr Mahathir would be held on Tuesday to further discuss these efforts.

He said the Government saw the need to intensify efforts to promote tourism as there was a 13 per cent drop in the number of tourists last year compared to the previous year.

"In 1996, a total 7.1 million tourists visited the country compared to only 6.2 million in 1997," he told reporters after launching Visit Negri Sembilan Year 1999 at the Seremban Municipal Council hall yesterday.

Also present was Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad and his wife, Puan Seri Hazizah Tumin and State Culture, Arts and Tourism Committee chairman Datuk Lilah Yassin.

Sabbaruddin said the drop in tourists was due to various factors including the Coxsackie B outbreak and the haze problem.

"We also hope to invite foreign journalists to the country next year to offer them first-hand knowledge on the many splendours of Malaysia and the benefits of spending their holidays here," he said.

On Visit Negri Sembilan Year, he said the State had a lot to offer in terms of its unique cultures and interesting tourist destinations.

Mohamad Isa said tourism projects in the State which had been postponed as a result of the present economic situation would be revived as soon as the economy improves.

He said this was necessary to ensure local tourist destinations were capable of meeting the demands of tourists and were able to compete with facilities offered in other countries.

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