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Beach umbrellas add colour to travel mart

LANGKAWI, Sun. - The first-ever Langkawi Travel Mart where international buyers and local sellers transact businesses under colourful beach umbrellas was opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today as part of the "Make It Langkawi" programme.

Sixty-eight tour operators from 28 countries are here for the day-long event at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre in Padang Matsirat.

More than 50 hotels, tour operators and other establishments involved in the travel trade on the island promoted their facilities to visitors, many of whom are decision-makers in their own establishments.

Unlike other travel marts where special booths are built, the organisers decided on the beach umbrella concept to portray the casual island atmosphere of Langkawi.

About 90 per cent of the overseas travel agents are first timers which means a wider overseas market to tap from.

Malaysia Airlines also brought in 32 foreign journalists and eight local journalists.

The mart is among the programmes of the "Make it Langkawi" campaign by Malaysia Airlines and the Langkawi Development Authority (Lada) to jointly promote the island resort.

MAS Golden Holidays and Lada recently initiated a three days-two nights holiday package dubbed "Langkawi Super Saver".

The package included accommodation, breakfast and airport transfer which is much less than the normal airfare to Langkawi from Kuala Lumpur.

At the launch of the programme today, Dr Mahathir turned salesman to promote Malaysia and Langkawi in particular.

He said Malaysia is an attractive destination especially for those from United States, Europe and Japan because of the currency exchange which made it even cheaper for them to be in Malaysia than in their own country.

"For people from these countries, their expenditure in Malaysia will only be one third of their expenses just staying at home.

"Moreover, it offers the opportunities to savour the cultures and cuisines of three races; namely Malays, Chinese and Indians.

"You do not have to go to Indonesia, China or India to experience this as you can get three for the price of one."

He also told the visitors to ignore the negative reports about Malaysia especially about the so-called political turmoil in the country.

Dr Mahathir said serene and beautiful Langkawi has won over many foreign tourists adding that it had also become an important convention and exhibition venue.

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