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Cross-border lift for tourism in northern States

IPOH, Sun. - The recent establishment of the Malaysia-Thailand Joint Committee is expected to boost tourism in the northern border States.

Perak is expected to benefit largely, since Pengkalan Hulu at the Malaysian-Thai border, draws many tourists from Thailand.

MTJC was formed in April in Golok, the border town in Kelantan, following a meeting between members of the National Tourism Council Malaysia (NTCM) and the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, and the Tourists Authority of Thailand and Thailand Tourist Association.

The objective was to pull in more tourists to the northern States via southern Thailand and at the same time promote Thai provinces such as Pattani, Songkhla, Narathiwat, Yala and Phuket.

NTCM president Datuk Mohd Zainal Abidin Kadir said MTJC would play an important role for the northern border States as they were the entry points for tourists from southern Thailand.

Mohd Zainal is currently the steering committee chairman of MTJC, by virtue of Perak being the host for the first MTJC gathering.

Speaking after the MTJC dinner gathering last night, Mohd Zainal, who is also a board member of Tourism Malaysia, said there were plans to include Perlis in the MTJC, which at present comprises Perak, Penang and Kedah.

"There are also plans to welcome Indonesia into the fold," he said.

To ensure that MTJC realised its objective, Mohd Zainal said a Tourism Leadership Congress would be held before the end of the year.

The congress would be held with the co-operation of the Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry.

Perak is bidding to host the congress which is scheduled to be held in December. It is expected to be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The aim is to gather tourism officials to seek ways to boost tourism for Malaysia and Thailand.

Also present at the gathering were the Royal Thai Consulate Consul-General Tuang Mukdasiri, his deputy Ninai Narkvichit, head of the Southern Thailand Tourist Business Association Kannika Dumrongwong.

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