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Rebak

CRUISING CLOSER TOWARDS BECOMING MEDITERRANEAN OF THE EAST

By: Mohd Nasir Yusoff

LANGKAWI, June 8 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's efforts to establish itself as the "Mediterranean of the East" cruised a step closer towards reality with the completion of yet another facility for boat and yacht owners in Rebak Marina Resort, an island in the cluster of 99 Langkawi islands.

It has been the vision of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to turn Malaysia as the cruise centre of the region, and it is only natural for Malaysian private sector to share his vision given the fact that Malaysia's waters is among the most beautiful in the world.

The facility at Rebak Marina Resort gives an added edge to lurch Malaysia forward towards that goal.

Rebak Besar, an exclusive island on the Latitude 6 degrees 17.4 North and Longitude 99 degrees 41.8 East, offering 128 berths since last year, is fast gaining popularity through word of mouth among seasoned seamen from around the world. This is evident from the exotic names of yachts which have found their way there and the various countries of their origin.

However, the facility is not just about all what the island of 160 hectare is. It is also a holiday resort with exclusivity high on the priority list of its manager, Glenmarie Hotels and Resorts Malaysia, a member of the DRB Hicom Group.

Since starting operations in May 1997, Rebak Marina Resort has undergone several developments including an increase in the number of rooms from 56 to 104 tastefully furnished. The buildings, housing four units of chalets each block, offer breathtaking seaview.

Family chalet costing RM380 per night, Superior Room (RM380), Deluxe Room (RM430) and Junior Suite (RM960), also offer CNN channels for guests on holiday but would like to keep in touch with the latest happenings around the globe.

Equipped with the standard four star hotels' facilities, Rebak Marina Resort has an edge over the other hotels on the main Langkawi island in its exclusive ambience. The island is not accessible to just everybody as only guests with confirmed bookings would be ferried to Rebak Marina from the private jetty in Port Langkasuka.

The resort is only 15 minutes away by boat from the main Langkawi island. Langkawi, the legendary island of Mahsuri, itself receives daily scheduled flights from Kuala Lumpur, Pulau Pinang, Singapore and Johor Baharu which took from 45 to 90 minutes.

For those who have the time to spare and more adventurous, driving to Kuala Kedah or Kuala Perlis to take the ferry to Langkawi, would be an enriching experience albeit a little longer and slightly tiring trip.

Especially for families with children, they could make an education detour to Kuala Kangsar and learn a little history on Malaysia's rubber industry starting point.

Would you believe that a rubber tree, said to be among the first 11 to be planted in Malaysia some 119 years ago is still alive right in the middle of Kuala Kangsar?

That is the historic tree which had helped Malaysia create its name as the world's leading natural rubber producer not too long ago.

Rebak got its name from a species of a tree dominant on the island. However, its popularity is not from its tree namesake but from its marina facilities and several other attractions offered by Glenmarie.

Its marina will be the first in Malaysia to have a hardstand which will

allow 67 yachts to dry dock for repairs and maintenance. The hardstand is expected to be ready by December this year.

According to Glenmarie Hotels and Resorts Marketing Director Zakariya Musa, a new attraction for tourists visiting Rebak Marina would be the Langkawi Crystal which would be opening its factory here in November and would enable guests to have first-hand experience in the crystal-making processes.

Rebak is rather quick in gaining popularity and boasts the fact that slightly more than 30 percent of its guests are repeat tourists. Its quiet exclusivity also attracts honeymooners from South Korea and Japan, one of the main groups of tourists who visited the island almost every month.

The resort is now in the midst of aggressively promoting itself as a destination for local tourists in line with the government's campaign to see more Malaysians holidaying within the country.

One need not be an experienced seaman nor does one need to have knowledge about boats and seas to visit and enjoy holidaying in Rebak Marina Resort. Instead, it is one of the best place to start nurturing one's interest in boating and sailing.

Among the tens of yachts berthing in the calm waters there at any one time, it is difficult not to notice the most antique and beautifully decorated one, the "Bahtera Purba", a gift from a Kelantanese businessman to Dr Mahathir.

The resort also offer classes for children from 12 to 18 years old, from the very basic lesson to the intermediate level and certified by the international maritime body.

Courses including practicals are conducted by experienced tutors under the watchful eyes of Chief Captain Ahmad Azamri. Lessons include getting to know body parts of boats and yachts, knots a seaman need to master and types of boats and yachts.

Certificates awaits those who completed the course but that is not the only rewards for them. They too are guaranteed to be able to take to the sea with confidence in the winds of up to 15km per hour.

And of course, fishing trips, sunset cruises and leisure sailing are among the other attractions offered to complete and enrich one's stay at an island resort. Indoor games and recreation facilities like snooker and darts are also available.

Those interested to enjoy Rebak Marina Resort can contact Glenmarie Hotels and Resorts at 03-2028461 or fax 03-2028462 or visit their homepage at <http://www.glenmarie.com>.

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