

22/01/1999

Entry rules for visitors from India, China to be relaxed

JOHOR BARU, Thurs. - The Immigration Department will continue to relax regulations and ease clearance for visitors, especially from India and China.

Immigration director general Datuk Aseh Che Mat said this was because the Government had identified these two countries as having the highest potential for tourism in Malaysia.

He said visitors from India and China were found to have high purchasing power and comprised a large proportion of total tourist arrivals to Malaysia from Southeast Asian countries.

"Malaysia is attractive to people from these two countries as there are Tamil- and Chinese-speaking people here," he said, noting that tourists from India were particularly keen on shopping for gold and electrical items in Malaysia and Singapore.

Aseh said tourist arrivals from India and China had increased significantly over the past year, with the number of visitors from India up from 42,000 in 1997 to 60,000 last year.

He said many entered Malaysia via Singapore, either on their own or through tour groups arranged by tour agents in Singapore.

Of the total 60,000 Indian visitors last year, 21,000 were said to have made prior arrangements to obtain visas to enter Malaysia from Singapore.

"Therefore, it is important for Immigration officers, especially at the Johor-Singapore Causeway and Second Link, to provide courteous and efficient service and prompt clearance to these visitors," he told reporters after attending a Hari Raya gathering with Immigration staff from the Causeway here today.

Also present were State Immigration director Tasnim Othman and newly-appointed senior assistant director Badaruddin Chek, who will head the Immigration operations at the Causeway.

Earlier in his speech, Aseh said Immigration officers played a pivotal role in boosting tourism as they were the first and last to greet visitors from abroad.

He urged them to adhere to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad's call to provide 'service with a smile'.

The courtesy campaign, which was launched in Kuala Lumpur earlier this month, will be extended to Johor soon.

(END)