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Tourists

SABAH CONFIDENT OF MEETING 400,000-TOURIST ARRIVALS TARGET

KOTA KINABALU, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- Sabah is confident of attaining more than 400,000 foreign tourist arrivals this year despite the isolated cases of abductions on Sipadan and Pandanan resort islands in April and September.

State Minister for Tourism Development, Environment, Science and Technology Datuk Chong Kah Kiat said while Sabah recorded 320,000 tourist arrivals last year, the Visit Sabah Year 2000's target of 512,000 foreign tourist arrivals may fall short.

"Right now, by the look of it, we will be short of the target but it will not be very far off target, we should be reaching over 400,000 in foreign tourist arrivals.

"We could have achieved it had it not been for the unfortunate incidents in Sipadan and Pandanan..we are short of about 100,000 or thereabout," he told reporters after opening the Kampung Air Sugarbun outlet, here today.

As for next year, the state government would focus on wooing tourists from Brunei, Singapore, the Philippines and Indonesia besides tapping the domestic market, he said.

Asked whether the Sipadan and Pandanan kidnappings had affected Sabah's tourism industry, he said: "We are very confident that life will be back to normal and for next year, we expect more tourist arrivals not just to the islands but also more arrivals to Sabah".

Earlier in his speech, Chong called on Malaysian companies especially Sabah-based ones to take up the challenge to compete on a global platform and towards this end, to seriously consider franchising.

He said the success of Sugerbun, which has 12 outlets throughout Sabah, was very much in line with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's vision of "Build, Support and Buy Malaysian Brands".

Supporting Malaysia's own franchises meant more foreign exchange earnings, he added.

-- BERNAMA

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