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Tourism sector to further boost economy

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WITHIN the next 10 years, we can expect a lot more activity in the local tourism industry as it has been chosen to be the key driver in the growth of the services sector during the Third Outline Perspective Plan as announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last Tuesday.

Here are the things that the local travel and tourism industry is now geared for:

- \* Tourist arrivals are expected to grow at an average rate of 7.5 per cent per annum.

- \* Focus will be on attracting more tourists to stay longer, spend more and make repeat visits. To achieve this, State tourism and culture authorities will be adopted and research and data collection will be intensified to upgrade the tourism database for policy formulation.

- \* Major activities include the preservation and conservation of historical sites, provision and upgrading tourism-related infrastructure and improvement of tourism products and services.

- \* Eco-tourism, rural tourism, culture and heritage, cruise sports, recreational tourism as well as meetings, conventions, and exhibitions will be further developed.

- \* New tourism products such as martial arts practised by various ethnic groups will get emphasis.

- \* The development of domestic tourism will be given priority and actively promoted in view of the increasing affluence of the population.

- \* Developments in the information and communication technology will enable the tourism industry to provide better services at competitive rates.

- \* The expansion of the tourism industry through a wider range of recreational and entertainment activities, better infrastructure and conservation of the environment will further improve the quality of the life of Malaysians.

- \* Human resources development will be given priority to enhance competency and professionalism to make the tourism industry more efficient and competitive.

- \* Tourism education for the public, hotel employees, tourist guides as well as Immigration and Customs personnel will be emphasised. This is to create greater awareness of the benefit of tourism and inculcate values of being good host to visitors besides preserving the nation's heritage and environment.

- \* Regional co-operation through joint tourism programmes among Asean countries will be rigorously pursued. Collaboration through Golden Triangle initiatives and other strategic programmes will be further strengthened.

- \* Collectively, more competitive tourism products will be packaged to attract more tourists.