

08 JUL 2003

Tourists

TOURIST ARRIVALS SLIDE BY 27.4 PCT TILL MAY, SAYS D-G

KUALA LUMPUR, July 8 (Bernama) -- Foreign tourists' arrivals to Malaysia between January and May dwindled by 27.4 per cent to 3.8 million from 5.33 million in the same period last year, said Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (Tourism Malaysia) Director-General Datuk Abdullah Jonid.

He said the drop was largely due to the deadly Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) which hit this region in March.

Realising the negative impact of SARS on Malaysia's tourism industry, Tourism Malaysia, in collaboration with Malaysia Airlines (MAS), took positive measures to launch promotions on a big scale in West Asian countries and Southeast Asian region, he said.

Among measures taken were placing advertisements in all the media, especially to give confidence to the people in West Asia that it was safe to visit Malaysia, he told reporters after launching Bernama-Tourism Malaysia 2003 Treasure Hunt here today.

Abdullah represented Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir at the launch.

Abdullah said Tourism Malaysia appointed several professional public relations agencies in Dubai, Lebanon, Turkey and Saudi Arabia to disseminate positive information on Malaysia.

With the measures taken, the government and Tourism Malaysia hoped to achieve the 15.3 million tourists' arrival target set by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in the 2003 Budget.

On the Bernama-Tourism Malaysia Treasure Hunt, Abdullah said it was among the supporting activities to complement the government's efforts in promoting domestic tourism.

He said boosting domestic tourism was Tourism Malaysia's main objective in its campaigns.

He said since the Cuti-Cuti Malaysia programme was launched in 1999, the domestic tourism industry picked up because the campaign to promote Malaysia's scenic locations had attracted many locals to visit the places.

The Bernama-Tourism Malaysia Treasure Hunt is jointly organised by the Employees' Club of the Malaysian National News Agency (BERNAMA) and Tourism Malaysia.

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