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S'PORE-TOURISM
ATF 2005 ROADSHOW ROLLS INTO S'PORE

By: Salbiah Said

SINGAPORE, Aug 5 (Bernama) -- Fresh from its successful staging in Kuala Lumpur on Monday, the Asean Tourism Forum (ATF) 2005 roadshow rolled into Singapore today, with officials upbeat over the region's prospects as a premier tourist destination.

At their promotional blitz for industry players and the local media here, they expressed confidence that the forum, to be held on the resort island of Langkawi in Kedah from Jan 21 to Jan 29 next year, would attract more participants than the one held in Laos last year.

The main highlight of ATF 2005 will be the Asean Travel Exchange (Travex), which will see some 400 buyers from around the world meeting and exploring business opportunities with over 400 sellers from the region.

Travex is also expected to draw 150 representatives from the international and local travel trade media.

Some 1,500 delegates are expected to turn up at Langkawi for the nine-day event, themed "Shifting the Paradigm - Prospering the Region."

The ATF 2005 committee comprises Tourism Malaysia, Malaysia Airlines, Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH), Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA), Asean Tourism Association (Aseanta) and the Langkawi Development Authority (Lada).

At today's presentation, Tourism Malaysia's Acting Director General, Mirza Mohammad Taiyab, who heads the ATF 2005 secretariat, said of the 400 buyers expected to participate in Travex, 25 percent would come from Asean.

The others are from Asia (28 percent); Oceania (7.0 percent); Middle East (10 percent); Europe (20 percent); Scandinavia (5.0 percent) and the Americas (5.0 percent).

Of the 400 booths at the travel exchange, 80 had been allotted for Singapore, he said.

Unlike the previous fora, next year's ATF would see more buyers

from
Asean's dialogue partners like Japan, China and South Korea, he
added.

In conjunction with the forum, the Asean Tourism Association
(Aseanta)
will organise the Asean Tourism Conference on Jan 26.

Former Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the
prime
mover of Langkawi's development from more than a decade ago, has
been
invited to deliver a keynote address at the one-day conference. But
this
had yet to be finalised, Aseanta president Agus Salim said.

The Deputy General Manager of the Langkawi Tourism Action
Council,
Shaharudin Itam, said Langkawi attracted an average of 130,000
tourists
each month.

Singaporeans comprised the bulk of the 600,000 foreign tourists
to the
island last year.

Of the seven million tourists who visited Malaysia so far this
year,
six million were from Asean countries.

"Seven generations have passed. Come to Langkawi and see for
yourself
how much development has taken place. It is now a flourishing
tourist
destination, with more hotels to accommodate visitors," Shaharudin
told
reporters.

At the presentation, the Assistant Chief Executive
(International) of
the Singapore Tourism Board, Dr Chan Tat Hon, said the long-term
prospects
of the tourism industry in Asia remained positive, especially in
Asean.

He was confident that intra-Asean traffic would grow in a big
way,
given the growing mobility of people in this region and commitment
from
governments in Asean towards ensuring the viability of the industry.

Dr Chan also urged local industry players to fully support the
forum in
Langkawi, noting that ATF 2005's success would also portray Asean's
success
as a dynamic region.

The ATF Forum 2005 will also have similar road shows to Jakarta
(Aug
6); Bangkok (Aug 9); Vientiane (Aug 10); Yangon (Aug 12); Phnom Penh
(Aug
16); Hanoi (Aug 18), Bandar Seri Begawan (Aug 24); Manila (Aug 25)

and
Medan (Sept 9). -- BERNAMA
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