

Ours is a blessed nation, says PM
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Malaysia ranked as the third most preferred destination in a poll conducted by independent Italian sources for visitors at the recent Expo Milano, according to Najib Abdul Razak.

The prime minister, who had attended the expo, believes this is a strong and positive indicator for the Malaysian tourism industry.

“We are after all, a blessed nation. Blessed with a vibrant economy with good balance between physical development and preservation of nature, blessed with a harmonious multicultural society as well as peace and stability. Our diversity is a blessing, something that unites us, not divide us.

“Malaysia is indeed a melting pot of culture, a destination that caters for all. A land of endless opportunities,” he said in a blog post today.

Najib said the theme of this year’s World Tourism Day on Sept 27, ‘One billion tourists, one billion opportunities’ struck a resonance to Malaysia’s journey towards 2020.

“When I first took over as prime minister, our country was faced with the challenge of having a sustainable source of income to run the country.

“Back then, our oil dependency was at 41.3 percent and our oil supply was predicted to be able to last for merely 15 years.

“Fifteen years means my grandchild would grow up to a Malaysia that would be struggling to sustain itself if nothing was done to rectify the problem,” he added.

Therefore, the prime minister said he initiated the National Transformation Programme (NTP) with a vision to create a sustainable system for developing Malaysia.

“Our homeland is the sacred ground that needs to be appreciated and treated with respect; our developments must continue to go hand in hand with the best interest of Malaysians.

“NTP allows our expectations for 2020 to be achievable via rationalised means. There was an urgent need to diversify our economy and the tourism industry plays an important role in strengthening and diversifying our economy,” he added.

Tourism opens up new opportunities

Najib pointed out that Malaysia’s tourism is now the sixth largest contributor to the national economy, contributing a total of RM161 billion or 14.9 percent of the GDP in 2014.

“In spite of a year of tragedies that saw the whole world grieve with us, our tourism industry still managed to attract 27.44 million tourists with RM72 billion in tourist receipts to boast.

“These are healthy figures that we are not afraid to flash out. However, the impact of tourism goes beyond tourist arrivals or tourist receipts, its impact is most important on the sustainable development of our economy and society,” he said.

Since the inception of NTP, Najib noted that the tourism industry has played a role in opening up new opportunities for Malaysians.

Due to the aggressive promotional campaigns abroad, he said, Malaysia is no longer known as “the country between Singapore and Thailand”.

“It has successfully showcased our uniqueness, our harmony and diversity. We are the model country for a progressive and moderate Islamic nation,” he added.

In turn, Najib said, this has benefited Malaysians directly, where in 2014 alone, the industry brought in RM19.4 billion of investment.

More impressively, he added, it has contributed a total of 1.77 million jobs (13 percent of total employment).

“The trickle down economy will benefit even the small homestay in the remote area of Sabah providing the local communities opportunities to enhance their quality of lives.

“The consistent growth of our tourism industry had also encouraged cultural practitioners to keep on championing our heritage as a source of living. I thank them especially for keeping our culture alive and reminding us of our identity.

“In realising the potential that we have, from the beauty of the Borneo islands to our lush tropical forests and shopping heavens, we will make the tourism industry the new frontier in facing the current economic challenges,” he added.