

**M'sia puts in 'pasar malam' effort at World Expo**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**July 05, 2010**

COMMENT The World Expo 2010 in Shanghai, running from May 1 to Oct 31, is the largest ever. About 100 million visitors are expected to visit the expo, making it the most visited in history.

Over 190 countries and more than 50 international organisations are participating, but it's unfortunate that other countries are taking it far more seriously than we are - competing to present their nations in the best possible light.

The Malaysia Pavilion at Shanghai World Expo lacks conceptual depth, vision and imagination, and has failed to impress visitors despite exhibiting a wide range of products and content.

Still, the traditional Minangkabau design of the pavilion does make it stand out among other South East Asian countries' pavilions.

But the eagerness of the Tourism Ministry to promote as many tourism spots as possible has resulted in the exhibit lacking focus as a whole.

NONEVisitors entering the pavilion will first see the traditional costumes of each ethnicity, followed by a Petronas Twin Towers stand, tropical rain forests and historical monuments from Penang and Malacca. The pavilion also features beaches, islands, golf courses and a section on Formula 1 racing.

Although its theme is 'One Malaysia, City Harmonious Living', the ministry has failed in developing it by not explaining the multi-ethnic characteristics of Malaysia in depth.

Disappointingly, the exhibits are too superficial and not linked to each other.

Even the Malay, Chinese, Indian and Kadazan traditional costumes at the pavilion entrance have no information or explanation for the visitors, who are mainly made up of Chinese citizens.

Accompanied by a few posters and brief notes, the introduction of world cultural heritage sites and Baba Nyonya culture in the two strait states is also boring and uninspiring.

NONEIn contrast, many countries such as Saudi Arabia, Monaco have used advanced multimedia technology and even 3D movies as big as four basketball courts to introduce their own countries.

Some countries such as Israel have used internet technology to allow the visitors to talk with their citizens, making the experience more interactive and interesting.

Other countries also brought in their national treasures - some being displayed abroad for the first time. France brought in seven renowned paintings while Denmark displayed its famed 'Little Mermaid' statue.

In return, their pavilions attracted huge crowds and visitors often needed to queue for two or three hours to enter.

In fact, the most popular ones like the Saudi Arabia and Japan pavilions had visitors queuing for over six hours to get in.

#### Improving the experience

Some visitors to the Malaysia pavilion believed that the experience could be improved if there was more imagination and depth in presenting the exhibits. The Baba Nyonya culture exhibit could have been enlivened with descriptions of their lifestyle in depth, perhaps explained by a real Baba or Nyonya, in costume.

The pavilion did have a Malay to demonstrate the unique Batik technique. However, not being able to communicate in Chinese meant that most of the visitors - who were of course from China - were pretty much left in the dark save for a brief introductory note out front.

NONEIn contrast, other countries like Finland, Germany and Saudi Arabia had fluent Chinese speaking staff.

To make matters worse at the Malaysia exhibit, the Chinese volunteers employed by the Ministry seem to lack direction and did not fulfill their responsibilities well. Indeed some seemed more absorbed in their handphones than the visitors.

Another disappointment is the pavilion, as some Malaysian tourists pointed out, is that it resembled a 'pasar malam' to promote commercial products.

Most of the space was used to promote commercial products like massage machines, coco drinks, tongkat ali coffee, furniture, paintings, and even palm oil and timber.

Still, these companies at least put more effort in to promote their products than the ministry staff and the volunteers.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.  
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/136422>