

**Malaysia Set To Be Major Destination For Muslim Tourists**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 5 (Bernama) -- Malaysia can emerge as a major destination for Muslim tourists and a business hub for Islamic countries, taking advantage of the inaugural World Islamic Tourism Mart 2012 (WITM 2012).

The three-day event will begin on May 31.

Hosted by the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA), the WITM 2012 is expected to woo 25,000 visitors.

Business-to-business (B2B) networking, exhibition featuring consumer products and services and conference will also be held during the event.

Deputy Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir said the WITM 2012 aims to enhance and unlock Muslim tourists' immense potential to propel Malaysia into a tourism hub and an Islamic business centre in this region.

"Muslims make up about 1.6 billion of the world's population and have over the years become more observant to Islamic tenets and certainly more affluent.

"This has led to a very large consumers' market which is yet to be fully explored or tapped into," he said at the soft launch of the WITM 2012.

Mukhriz said that even non-Muslim travel agents have set up their own Muslim tour departments to tap the vast potential of the Muslim tourism industry.

Meanwhile, WITM Chairman Zarinah Hashim said 120 booths have been allocated for B2B networking sessions and some 500 quality buyers comprising business owners, company directors and top management officials.

"We already have confirmed buyers, sellers and a number of countries, including the United Kingdom, Turkey, China, India, Pakistan, Oman and many more have confirmed attendance," she said.

Zarinah said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has been invited to be the keynote speaker while former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad will be one of the main speakers.

"We have confirmed speakers from the United States, China and the Middle East besides prominent Malaysian speakers," she said.

About 500 delegates are expected to attend the conference.

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