

## **'Malaysia's Participation In Stuttgart Travel Show A Big Success'**

**Bernama**

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**By Manik Mehta**

FRANKFURT, Jan 30 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's participation as a partner country at the CMT Consumer Travel Fair in Stuttgart in mid-January was a big success and provided the country good visibility as a destination, said a Tourism Malaysia representative.

Syed Yahya Syed Othman, Director of the Frankfurt office of Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB), said: "It was a highly successful participation at the show and I can say that we raised the visibility not only amongst the trade but also the consumers."

In an interview with Bernama, he said the MTPB organised a total of eight sub-events at the Stuttgart fair, including a travel mart attended by representatives of leading travel agencies in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg.

"This was the biggest exposure for Malaysia in one single event. We had between 5,000 and 8,000 visitors to our pavilion each day," he said.

He said Europe was a very important source of tourism traffic to Malaysia with some 1.5 million visitors in 2010.

In the first half of 2011, however, traffic from Germany had declined five percent to 65,000 over the year-earlier period due to the natural catastrophe and the following nuclear contamination in Japan which many Germans and Europeans feared were too close to Malaysia.

Additionally, the Middle East crisis affected the flow of traffic because most Gulf-based carriers flying from Europe to Malaysia make stopovers in Arab countries which many Westerners are now avoiding.

"Frequencies to Malaysia need to be stepped up," said Reinhard Mayer, a German businessman who frequently travels to Southeast Asia.

Indeed, many travel agents and tour operators in Germany are frustrated and disappointed with the low frequencies that national carrier Malaysia Airlines (MAS) offers.

They vented their frustration at the CMT Stuttgart fair where some operators and travel agents complained that because of inadequate MAS flights, they had to turn away holidaymakers interested in directly flying to Malaysia.

"We offer Malaysia as a destination since 12 years. Tourism traffic to Malaysia has grown very well... we offer more than 10 different kinds of package tours of Malaysia alone.

"But I am disappointed that MAS has reduced its number of flights to Malaysia," said Sinasi Isbir, the proprietor of a Munich-based tour operating company called Asian Dream.

He said MAS could also fly directly from Munich and easily fill in capacity because of the

strong demand that exists.

Isbir also said that Malaysia should not concentrate on setting up only five-star hotels but also provide good affordable hotels in popular tourist resorts such as Kuching, Kota Kinabalu and Langkawi.

Previously, MAS had a daily flight to Kuala Lumpur from Frankfurt and reduced the number of flights to five and, later, to four a week.

Juergen Anding, Product Manager (Asia) of Frankfurt-based Airways Travel, said that even the four or five flights a week were not always consistently available

"I am selling Malaysia as a destination for nearly 30 years. What we need is a strategy from MAS that is consistent and transparent," he said.

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