

**Penang Tourism Sector Outstanding – Ahmad Zahid
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GEORGE TOWN, Dec 18 (Bernama) -- Penang continues to shine as one of the leading states in the country in terms of tourism and the industry has also dominated 40 per cent of the overall state's economy, according to Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

He said THE TOP@Komtar, a new tourism spot in the state, could be a platform to promote Penang locally and also internationally.

"Penang has long been a favourite spot among tourists, both locally and internationally.

"In fact, this paradise island has been making its mark across the globe, and most recently, it has earned a place among the top 10 best places to retire in the world as ranked by acclaimed travel magazine Conde Nast Traveller," he said in his speech in conjunction with the official opening of THE TOP@Komtar here today.

The text of his speech was read out by Culture and Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz.

The deputy prime minister added that with the opening of the new attraction, which comes with a skyhigh transparent bridge, it was a stepping stone for the state to assist the country into achieving the nation's goal in becoming a prominent high-income nation in the international landscape.

"This tallest structure is not just an icon but it also serves as a reminder of the late Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu's vision for Penang. When Tun Dr Lim was appointed as the Chief Minister he realised that there was a need for urban development and heritage conservation and thus, Komtar was conceived. Thus, the legacy must continue," he said.

Ahmad Zahid also commended Only World Group for taking a bold step forward in giving a new lease of life to Komtar.

Based on data collected by Tourism Malaysia, in 2015 alone, the state recieved 6.3 million domestic and international tourist arrivals.

THE TOP@Komtar is part of the iconic and historical building that had been the icon for the state for decades and was built during the era of former Chief Minister, Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu in 1970's.

THE TOP is expected to become a new attraction in the state. It includes Rainbow Skywalk at level 68; lookout tower and a jurassic research centre.

Meanwhile, Mohamed Nazri said the federal government was committed to assist in upgrading the funicular train car service to Bukit Bendera (Penang Hill), which is a top tourist spot, to a cable car service to meet current and future needs.

He said the upgrade was necessary as there had been a tremendous growth in visitors to Bukit Bendera, from 200,000 in 2008 to 1.6 million now.

"That is why in my ministry's allocations, each year a sum is set aside for this service. Bukit Bendera certainly needs a cable car service to cater to the ever increasing number of visitors," he said.

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