

Industry Players Should Take Advantage of Tourist Arrivals This Year - DPM

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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's tourism industry players should take full advantage of the next wave of international tourist arrivals which is projected to grow by four to five per cent in Asia and the Pacific this year.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said with the creation of meaningful and high value products, accompanied by excellence in service quality, they would be able to attract greater number of international tourists to this country.

"The World Tourism Organisation or UNWTO outlook for 2016, projects international tourist arrivals to grow by four per cent worldwide and by region, growth is expected to be stronger in Asia and the Pacific, ranging between plus four per cent to plus five per cent.

"As such, I believe there is no better time than now for Malaysia to take full advantage of the next wave of growth," he said when officiating the 19th Malaysia Tourism Awards 2014/2015 at the PWTC here Wednesday night.

He said the government would play its role to develop policies that would make Malaysia a more tourist-friendly destination with priorities on national security and travel facilitation.

Ahmad Zahid said the implementation of visa-exemption and e-visa system to facilitate the travel of more Chinese tourists to Malaysia were among measures that indicated the government's seriousness to improve the tourism sector in the country.

With a target to attract eight million Chinese tourists over five years, he said the government had made it easier for them to come to Malaysia as the competition to attract them was very stiff, with Thailand and Indonesia also after Chinese tourists.

"Each, with their own attractions but Malaysia, I know, has the edge over them as we are truly multi-racial, multi-cultural and a multi-religion nation.

"This is an advantage, unique to Malaysia that we must ride on in promoting our country to the Chinese tourists," he added.

During the speech, Ahmad Zahid also announced that national artist and singer Shila Amzah, who is very popular in China would be appointed Malaysia's Tourism Ambassador to attract more tourists from that country.

Earlier, the deputy prime minister pointed out, over the years, the tourism industry in Malaysia had grown significantly, both in terms of tourist arrivals, as well as economic contribution.

He said, from a mere 5.5 million tourist arrivals in 1998, contributing some RM8.5 billion in tourism

receipts, Malaysia was expected to attract 36 million tourists in 2020, generating RM168 billion in tourist receipts.

Also present at the awards ceremony were Tourism and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, his deputy, Datuk Mas Ermieyati Samsudin and hundreds of tourism industry players.

Organised by the tourism and culture ministry, a total of 65 awards were presented to industry players whose outstanding contributions played a significant role in the success of Malaysia's tourism industry.

The awards included Best Local Tour Operator, Best Foreign Tour Operator, Best Tour Package, Best Tourist Attraction, Best Tourist Guide, Best Homestay and Best Hotel Service.

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