

# MOTAC increasing efforts to boost domestic tourism

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KUALA LUMPUR, March 5 (Bernama) -- The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) is increasing its efforts to encourage more Malaysians to travel domestically within the country.

It is targeting 92.8 million local tourists with a contribution of RM76.9 billion to the economy this year compared with 85.2 million domestic tourists who contributed RM68.5 billion in 2019.

Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board head of secretariat Visit Malaysia (VM) 2020/ domestic & events division senior director Datuk Dr Ammar Abd Ghapar said this is to ensure that the whole network chain can continue to move on and survive in their businesses and jobs despite the drop in foreign tourist arrivals due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The network chain comprises hotels, transportation, restaurants, retail operators and their respective employees.

“At this juncture, we are not reviewing the target for foreign tourist arrivals as we are still monitoring the situation. Besides pushing for domestic tourism, we are also doing our best to attract more ASEAN tourists, mainly neighbouring countries, mainly Brunei, Indonesia and Thailand,” he told reporters after the Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) Meet and Greet event here today.

The VM2020 campaign targets 30 million foreign tourist arrivals and RM100 billion in tourism receipts.

Ammar said that the economic stimulus package announced by then-interim Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Feb 27 would also greatly benefit the tourism industry such as the hotel and retail sectors.

To stimulate the tourism industry, the government is giving a personal income tax relief of up to RM1,000 on spending related to domestic tourism. Malaysians are also eligible for digital vouchers for domestic tourism of up to RM100 per person for domestic flights, rail travel and hotel accommodation.

Meanwhile, MM2H director Datin Sharifah Ikhlas Aljaffree is optimistic of seeing the number of applications for the MM2H programme surpass the 8,000 mark this year based on encouraging enquiries and promotional activities.

In 2019, Malaysia received the highest number of applications -- 7,904 -- among about 100 countries which also have a similar programme.

From 2002-2019, she said, the government approved over 48,000 MM2H applications, with interest booming over the past five years.

“Meantime, we are studying and reviewing the current policy and strategies for the programme as we need to be more competitive in attracting more quality or high net worth individuals into this programme.

“Our target is not based on the nationality of the applicant, but more towards those having a household income of over US\$2,000 per month.

“Individuals from China topped the list with the number of applications amounting to 15,883 (for 2002-2019),” said Sharifah Ikhlas.

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