

MALAYSIA 2010: TOURISM GROWTH BRINGS GOVERNMENT INCENTIVES



Asian tigers have been attracting considerable attention over the past decade and even though Malaysia had been considered as slightly lacking behind, it is now attracting all the attention. In fact, the recorded tourist arrivals in 2009 exceeded all estimates. **The initial target was 19 million visitors yet the total of tourist arrivals added up to 23.5 million.** The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak revealed that tourism last year earned about RM 51 billion (€ 10.6 billion) and the government has a clear vision as to how to take advantage of such positive records.

The Prime Minister also mentioned this is the perfect time to focus on fresh ideas and new quality products. The times are still very difficult and the standard of services will need to improve. According to Mr. Najib, **Malaysian government is prepared to grant RM 899 million (€187 million) to the industry with the aim of upgrading its infrastructure, invest in training of frontliners and extend the range of appealing tourism products and events over the next year.**

Local government hopes to increase the potential of the services sector as such and expects it to expand by 3.6% in 2010. By 2020, the sector should contribute 60% to the GDP.

The recently emerged religious tensions however worry the Tourism Ministry. Several arson attempts on churches around the country do not exactly speak for a safe country. Despite these events, Malaysia retains a very friendly image. According to a recent survey conducted by the HSBC Bank, Malaysia is considered an unusually comfortable and friendly country. The survey of 3,100 expatriates aimed to rank their new homes based on many relevant factors and Malaysia won fifth place, after Bahrain, Canada, Australia, and Thailand.

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