Tourism Bits & Bytes

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Survival & Surviving the Political & Economical Leash

With the intense political bickering that is going on in the country now, the general public seems to be loss and totally neglected. The people are struggling with economic condition of the country; companies are trying to juggle to manage their operations without going bust.

The impact of the current political and economic situation of the country is also slowly eroding tourist confidence to visit the country. No thanks to the announcement by the cabinet recently to reduce the government events at hotels, the Malaysia Association of Hotels (MAH) reported that approximately RM100 million losses were experienced by the hotel industry in Malaysia after 85 percent event bookings by government departments and government linked agencies were cancelled over the past two months. The Tourism Ministry as reported by The Star on 4th July is proposing to the cabinet to review this ruling.

For the year 2007, tourism contributed RM46 billion in revenue to the country. Thus, measures must be taken to safeguard the industry that has in the past survived trying times. More efforts must be taken to encourage Malaysians to travel and spend their vacation within the country. Last year, 22 million Malaysians traveled overseas, whereas only 21 million tourist arrivals were recorded in the country. Thus, there seem to be a balance number of people leaving the country for business, leisure or VFR (visiting friends and relative).

It was also interesting to find that hotels in Negri Sembilan recorded the lowest occupancy rate in Malaysia for 2007 (51.2 percent) despite being home to some good and popular beaches in West Malaysia. The rate is below the national occupancy average of 68 percent. Again Port Dickson is used to win more tourist (more Singaporeans to be exact) to Negri Sembilan. Indeed, Port Dickson needs serious branding to make it a preferred family holiday destination. The State Government is currently proposing to make Port Dickson as health, wellness, sporting and cultural centre.

To make matters worse, now we have the issue of cabbies in Kuala Lumpur who have stopped using meters because they say increasing the fares is the only way they can survive and cope with rising costs. So, how will our visitors from abroad react to these situations? Do we blame the cabbies for their actions? Maybe not as we are all beset by

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this economic condition of the world due to the increasing price of the fuel.

Nonetheless, all these issues are lost in the more ‘entertaining’ and ‘drama’ on our political scene that is selling newspapers like hot cakes. Can there be an end to this period of indolence? The general public is crying for help but our elected leaders are so embroiled in the political saga that is slowly eroding the investors’ interest in Malaysia. No thanks also due to the computer glitch at the Bursa Malaysia that added negative momentum to an already bearish environment.

Are we going to derail our Vision 2020 to be a fully developed nation? Or is this process part of being a fully developed nation as implied by one of the opposition party leader.

We pray and hope to see the light at the end of the tunnel soon.

(c) drV 7 July 2008

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August 2008 Home June 2008

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