

Tourism will remain a major economic sector

SANDAKAN: The tourism sector will continue to be at the forefront of Malaysia's economic development.

And, as one of the major Halatuju sectors, tourism will remain an economic catalyst of the State.

This year 2.75 million tourists or more are expected to visit Sabah, repeating the positive performance in 2011.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Haji Aman said this at the grand opening of Four Points by Sheraton and Sandakan Harbour Square here last night.

In his speech read by Youth & Sports Minister Datuk Peter Pang En Yin, he said as Sabah continued to grow as a popular tourist destination, tourist arrival figures

would continue to increase in the years to come.

"This also means more hotel rooms are needed to accommodate the increasing number of visitors. Hence the opening of this hotel is indeed timely," he said.

Musa also said he believed that through proper planning and sound management, the hospitality and property sectors would continue to significantly contribute to the State's economy while giving more attractive return on investment for developers.

"In this context, the government will continue to support and provide incentives in order to generate more vigorous growth in the hospitality, property and tourism sectors," he added.

Musa also expressed the importance of close cooperation between the government and private sector, which he said was in line with the commitment to be a pro-business government and approach towards the private sector as partner.

"In this regard, I believe that there are still many opportunities that should be jointly explored for the benefit of both the public and private sectors.

"Such collaboration will strengthen the confidence of domestic and foreign investors towards our economy and the huge potential of our domestic tourism," he said. And, the Chief Minister also called on State departments and agencies especially those that functioned as implementing agencies to

be committed in their role and responsibilities as facilitators towards the development of the tourism, hospitality and property sectors.

He praised the smart partnership between the Sandakan Municipal Council, ICSD Ventures Sdn Bhd and Ascana Properties Limited in the implementation of this project.

He said such an integrated project was suitable in view of Sandakan's position as a modern and aggressive district in the east coast.

Meanwhile, he also urged hotel operators and commercial property developers to be mindful of the need to reduce carbon footprint.

"Environment conscious guests will be drawn to your establishments if you show a real commitment in going green.

"It is also important for hotels and commercial property developers in Sabah including Sandakan to raise the bar on standards and services so that your guests and customers will return not only to Sabah, but also to your hotel and mall in this case.

"Hence please strive to maintain the cleanliness and aesthetic elements of your premises," the Chief Minister added.

Musa also called on industry players to not only focus on the commercial aspect of their business but also to be mindful of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) towards the surrounding communities by providing clean and safe areas as well as facilities that were conducive for recreational activities. - PR