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Income from tourism targeted at RM3 billion weekly by 2020

PADANG BESAR: Malaysia is expected to earn RM3 billion a week from tourism by 2020, said Tourism Deputy Minister Datuk Dr James Dawos Mamit yesterday.

He said the target was in line with the implementation of the Malaysian Tourism Transformation Plan to boost the local tourism industry.

Speaking at the handing-over of tourism facilities for the recreational and flora education centre at the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia's (FRIM) teak farm, here yesterday, he said 36 million tourists were targeted to visit Malaysia by 2020.

He said the number would give an income of RM168 billion to the country for a year or RM3 billion a week.

Throughout last year, 24.6 million tourists visited Malaysia and contributed RM56.4 billion

to the national income or RM1 billion a week.

Dawos said the Tourism Ministry would cooperate with numerous parties including FRIM to encourage tourists to visit Malaysia by providing more infrastructural facilities.

"Currently, Malaysia is 9th in the world in terms of the number of international tourist arrivals and second in Asia after China," he said.

On the tourism sector in Perlis, Dawos said 779,056 tourists visited the state last year, an increase of 13.7 per cent over the 2009 figure of 672,393.

He said the ministry was working to attract more tourists to Perlis including through the implementation of the RM3 million tourism infrastructural project at the FRIM's teak farm.

The project was among 39 tourism development projects implemented under the Ninth Malaysia Plan in Perlis involving an allocation of RM71 million.

Dawos said Perlis could also capitalise on its natural beauty, including padi fields, limestone hills and caves to draw tourists to the state.

The project at the teak farm, among others, involved the construction of a 100-metre long and 12-metre high hanging bridge, a camping site, a log cabin and a briefing/information hall.

The 58-year-old teak farm is located in the 455-hectare Mata Ayer forest reserve and is used as a research centre for teak trees and is also an eco-tourism spot.

The area was first planted with teak trees in 1953 while the FRIM station started its operations in 1974. - Bernama