

Malaysia unveils 10-year tourism plan

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 23 January, 2021



Dhaka: Malaysia has launched a 10-year plan to revive its tourism industry crushed in the coronavirus pandemic, estimated to have lost more than MYR 100 billion (USD 24.61 billion) in 2020.

The Southeast Asian country had initially targeted 30 million tourist arrivals through its 'Visit Malaysia 2020' program, up from 28 million last year. But the global pandemic has crippled the tourism industry, which in 2019 had contributed MYR 240.2 billion, or 15.9 percent of Malaysia's gross domestic product. This was revealed by the country's Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin in a statement recently.

Malaysia closed its borders to most foreigners in March, with entry strictly limited to business purposes, as part of restrictions imposed to stem the spread of the coronavirus. That has helped to keep infections to less than 100,000 and COVID-19 deaths to just 439.

"Clearly, we have been impacted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic this year and economic activities related to the tourism industry... are being forced to face their most difficult moments," Muhyiddin said during a virtual launch of a national tourism policy for 2020-2030.

The policy would be focused on strengthening competitiveness, encouraging sustainable

and inclusive tourism, as well as planning for future disasters, Muhyiddin said. It also seeks to brand Malaysia as an ecotourism destination, with a commitment towards balancing the development and conservation of its natural environment and heritage, he added.

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