

VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR CONSTRAINT

Airline seats shortage

By MARY ZACHARIAH

THE shortage of airline seats for travel within the country during Visit Malaysia Year will be a constraint that the authorities have to contend with, said Culture and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik.

"This is a limitation that we have to accept even though Malaysia Airlines is trying its best to overcome the shortage," he told reporters after receiving 750 Shell 1990 calendars in conjunction with Visit Malaysia Year.

The minister said seats to popular destinations such as Kuching and Pulau Langkawi are already difficult to obtain.

The Tourist Development Corp (TDC) expects 4.2 million tourists next year — a 10 per cent increase over 3.8 million arrivals last year.

Asked about the promotions to

concentrate on long-haul tourists to Malaysia, Datuk Sabbaruddin said Malaysia Airlines' destinations such as Paris and Amsterdam will help increase inbound tourists. He added that the increased frequency to Japan will also help to increase the number of long-haul tourists to Malaysia.

Commenting on the recent World Travel Mart held in London, an annual event for the travel and tour industry, Datuk Sabbaruddin said the response was very good. He added many hoteliers and tour operators had signed contracts with their Malaysian counterparts. However, no details were made available.

On the proposed world chess final to be held in the country in March next year, Datuk Sabbaruddin said the prize money will be increased to 600,000 Swiss francs from 300,000 Swiss francs.

"We have a few places in mind for the final but we haven't made any decision yet," said Datuk Sabbaruddin. The final, between former world champion Anatoly Karpov of the Soviet Union and Jan Timman of Holland, is expected to last about a month.

Earlier in his speech, the minister said Malaysians should not stop working at wooing tourists when Visit Malaysia Year ends in December next year.

"We should always be ready to attract tourists to the country," said Datuk Sabbaruddin. The minister also called on private sector organisations to contribute to tourism by sponsoring reading materials like leaflets, brochures and books on the country.

Shell's executive director of corporate affairs Encik Mohd Nizar Idris said the 750 calendars presented to the minister are for

distribution to TDC offices worldwide.

"We hope the calendars will play a part in attracting travellers to Malaysia," said Encik Mohd Nizar.

Shell's theme for its annual calendar 1990 is folk-tales of Malaysia. It features six paintings by artist Syed Thajudeen. It took the artist seven months to complete the paintings.

Bernama adds: Finance Minister Datuk Paduka Daim Zainuddin said in Sungai Petani yesterday that Malaysia will always be a prime destination for foreign tourists if the cleanliness in the towns and kampungs is maintained by everyone even after the Visit Malaysia Year 1990 is over.

He said Malaysians should also provide good treatment to foreign tourists in conjunction with the Visit Malaysia Year.



■ SYED THAJUDEEN ... six paintings on folk-tales of Malaysia