

Grads urged to go into eco-tourism

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KOTA KINABALU: Geography and History graduates of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) are urged to consider a career in eco-tourism.

Tourism Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen, said this considering that Sabah now is a popular destination not only among foreign visitors but also among Malaysians.

"The tourism sector is a good choice for a career for your future," she said at the presentation of 1Malaysia student discount card at the UMS.

She said the Sabah premier institute of higher learning has 17,143 students pursuing their undergraduate studies and 1,143, post-graduate studies.

To this, she said the spotlight would be focused on young people so that they understand the importance of the tourism industry and how tourism can become their career so as to improve their standard of living.

She said they must grab such opportunity so as to reduce the unemployment rate among university and college graduates.

So important the tourism industry is to the country, she said, the government has set a target of 497,200 employment opportunities in the industry by 2020.

"It will provide employment to the locals which is 30 per cent higher than in 2009," she said.

Last year, Dr Ng said 24.7 million tourists visited the country that earned Malaysia an income of RM58.3 billion compared to 24.5 million visitors in 2010 with revenue of RM56.5 billion.

She said the government is targeting 25 million visitors to Malaysia this year.

And it looks like Malaysia would be able to achieve the target based on the scenario of visitors between January and June this year at 11.6 million compared to 11.3 million in the same period last year.

The revenue, she said, also

increased in the same period, RM25.7b last year to RM26.8 billion this year.

"The increase showed that foreign tourists are getting more confident with Malaysia and will continue to visit Malaysia.

She said Sabah's tourism is also moving on the upward trend especially in eco-tourism.

Between the first six months this year, she said, Sabah attracted 1.372 million visitors.

Last year, Dr Ng said the Global Peace Index (GPI) placed Malaysia as the safest country in Southeast Asia and fourth in the Asia Pacific region after New Zealand, South Korea and Japan.

The United Nation World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) also, she said, has acknowledged Malaysia as the ninth best nation in the world in tourism destination sector for the third year in a row since 2009.

To this, she reiterated that the tourism sector is among the best choice for the students as a career.



Dr Ng (standing, centre) with UMS staff and students at the presentation of 1Malaysia student discount card on Monday.