

# Malaysia celebrates independence and achievements



Kuala Lumpur houses the Petronas Twin Towers, the world's tallest twin buildings.

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Today is a time of joy in Malaysia, as the country commemorates its 53rd independence day, or "Hari Merdeka."

"It is customary that Malaysia has its national day parade at 'Dataran Merdeka,' or the Merdeka Square, in Kuala Lumpur on Aug. 31," Lim You Rang (林佑穰), acting president of Malaysian Friendship and Trade Center (MFTC, 馬來西亞友誼及貿易中心) told The China Post in an interview on Aug. 24.

On Hari Merdeka, "we normally have national day parades from the national level to the district level, in which Malaysians gather and cheer," Lim continued.

The Merdeka celebrations, however, last throughout the month of August, in a series of festivities that include fireworks and parades.

The theme for this year's Hari Merdeka is "1 Malaysia, Transforming the Nation," emphasizing "ethnic harmony, national unity and efficient governance." "1 Malaysia" is an on-going campaign introduced by Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak in 2008.

"The values articulated [by the campaign] are perseverance, a culture of excellence, acceptance, loyalty, education, humility, integrity and meritocracy," Lim explained.

Hari Merdeka is a time that many Malaysians show patriotism by displaying the Malaysian flag, or "Jalur Gemilang," on their houses or commercial premises. It also provides a chance for tourists to understand the unique culture and history of Malaysia.

The country has become a popular tourist destination over the years. It attracted 23.65 million tourists last year, according to Tourism Malaysia. The tourism industry is the second largest foreign exchange earner in the country.



"The Malaysian government is working very hard to ensure that Malaysia remains a paradise for investors," said Acting President of Malaysian Friendship and Trade Center (馬來西亞友誼及貿易中心) Lim You Rang (林佑穰).

In fact, the country ranked tenth in the number of international tourists in 2009 according to the World Tourism Organization.

Lonely Planet, the world's largest travel guide book publisher, chose Malaysia as one of the top 10 "Best in Travel" destinations this year. It also picked the country as one of the "Best Value Destinations."

"Malaysia is a shopping paradise offering relatively

cheap accommodation without compromising services and quality," Lim remarked.

Aside from having a multi-cultural heritage, the country possesses diverse attractions, such as its 130-million-year-old rainforests, marine parks and rich ecosystem and biodiversity. Some of its destinations are listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

F1 Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix, the country's biggest racing event, is a major attraction for racing enthusiasts from all over the world.

"The UNESCO heritage sites, F1 [race], natural wonders, rain forests and marine parks are some of the common reasons why Taiwanese [people] travel to Malaysia," Lim said.

Other than the well-known attractions mentioned, Lim also recommended tourists to visit Tunku Abdul Rahman Park for water activities. The park is comprised of five islands and is about a 10-to-20-minute speedboat ride away from Kota Kinabalu.

"Malaysia's underwater world is very diverse and colorful with a large number of different species. The water is very calm and has high visibility, so it is very good for newcomers [to water activities]," Lim said.

To conserve the country's natural beauty and resources, the Malaysian government has been vigorously promoting Green Technology (GT).

GT is defined by the National Green Technology Policy as "the development and application of products, equipment, and systems used to conserve the natural environment and resources, while minimizing and reducing the negative impact of human activities on the environment."

The policy is aimed at guiding Malaysians toward



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quality living and healthy environment.

The MFTC actively introduces Malaysia's culture right here in Taiwan. The women's association of MFTC, made up of the spouses of MFTC officers, sells "nasi lemak," a rice dish sold in Malaysia, every now and then. Interested parties simply have to contact the MFTC. "The next promotion will be on Sept. 30," Lim said.

It will also hold a Food and Cultural Promotion Week at the Taipei Grand Hotel (台北圓山大飯店) from Nov. 9 to 14. Several Malaysian chefs and a performing troupe will be brought in for the event to provide authentic Malaysian cuisine as well as performances.

The MFTC Tourism Division maintains a Chinese website ([www.promotemalaysia.com.tw](http://www.promotemalaysia.com.tw)) to give Taiwanese people convenient access to information on Malaysia.

"[The website] focuses on introducing tourism information as well as food and culture.

There is a lot of valuable information," Lim remarked.

Malaysia declared independence from British colonial rule in 1957. According to Malaysia's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), investors have reported that political stability after the country's independence helped create a "pro-business" and "investor-friendly" climate.

Malaysia is Taiwan's ninth largest trading partner and the seventh largest source of imports for Taiwan.

The Malaysian government offers attractive tax incentives and intellectual property protection.

"The government is working very hard to ensure that Malaysia remains a paradise for investors," Lim remarked.

This year, the country was listed as the tenth most competitive country in the world by the Institute of Management Development's World Competitiveness Yearbook.

In 2009 alone, Malaysia ranked number one for investor protection by the Forbes Report, rated the third most attractive outsourcing location on the AT Kearney Global Services Location Index and took the twentieth spot out of 181 economies surveyed in the World Bank Doing Business report.

According to MITI, Malaysia's "ultra-modern infrastructure, industrial parks and integrated economic zones that provide the backbone to an economy located at the crossroads of East-West trade" make the country a popular location for doing business. Located at the center of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, Malaysia has access to a domestic market of 28 million people and regional markets of over 500 million people. ■



Malaysia's calm and clear water is suitable for water activities.