

Booming tourism in PH hits 3.3-M

Written by Administrator
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CLARK FREEPORT, Pampanga — The country's tourism industry continues to boom with an estimated 3.3 million tourists visiting the Philippines last year.

In spite of this, the Department of Tourism (DOT) admitted that the figure ranked the country merely sixth in terms of tourist arrivals among the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Socorro Caraig, chief of the accreditation division of the DOT, revealed this during the recent national convention of the National Association of Independent Travel Agencies of the Philippines, Inc. (NAITAP) held here as she noted "outdated" tourism standards in the country which the government is now upgrading.

She cited statistics indicating that annual tourist arrivals in the Philippines were estimated at only 3.3 million, which is sixth in ranking below Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam.

Malaysia's annual tourist arrivals reach about 25 million, Caraig added.

The other ASEAN members are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.

Caraig lamented that only 20 percent of tourism establishments in the country are accredited with the DOT.

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) estimated that foreign visitors in Asia-Pacific grew by four percent last May, with South Asia and Southeast Asia sub-regions recording strong performances for the month.

Latest reports, however, indicated that tourist arrivals for the first seven months of 2011 reached

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a total of 2,280,184 or an 11.83 percent increase over last year's 2,039,002 for the same period.

Monthly growth of tourists has been noted this year, the biggest registered in July with 360,784 while the month of February recorded the highest growth of 18.52 percent.

The association noted that Southeast Asia recorded the largest arrivals gain of 16 percent during the month of May, with Thailand posting a 66 percent increase in arrivals, Vietnam 37 percent, Myanmar 33 percent, Cambodia 12 percent and Singapore 11 percent.

Caraig said that the DOT is now "evolving" tourism standards at par internationally as she expressed confidence that all tourism facilities in the country would be accredited with the DOT.

At present, she said only 842 "primary" establishments ranging from hotels to home-stay lodges and only 180 "secondary" establishments providing other tourist services such as restaurants are DOT-accredited.