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Saigon Exhibition & Convention Centre (SECC) • Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

INDUSTRY NEWS UPDATE

Growing fast and furious

"WE are all set to embrace tourism in a big way," said Deputy chief of promotion (tourism) Truong Van Dong of Ho Chi Minh (HCM) City's Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

During a dialogue with KDU lecturers and student representatives, he revealed that the department had, for a start, come up with a calendar of events to woo tourists to the city all year round.

Currently tourist arrivals peak between the months of November and February.

"There will be a series of events like flower shows, shopping carnivals, sports events and cultural shows each week to ensure a steady number of tourist arrivals each month to the city as compared to some months of the year," Truong said.

"Another special area that we plan to focus on is Vietnamese cuisine, which has a favourable reputation in both the East and West.

"Moreover, some of our foods have a distinct taste because of the French influence.

"We see potential in this and will probably market ourselves as the 'Kitchen of the World,'" he said.

His department plans to have road shows soon in Berlin, Moscow, Hong Kong and several other cities in China.

Truong said that while the hospitality sector had contributed significantly to Vietnam's economy recently, the industry was still "new and facing teething problems".

He said HCM city, a former French colony, was growing too fast and was unable to cope with the daily pollution and traffic snarls.

"To overcome this, we have temporarily stationed 'tourist guards' to help visitors get across from one street to another."

The city, he added, had 10 five-star, seven four-star and 20 three-star hotels. However, these were insufficient and there were plans to build more in the next few years.

Plans were also in the pipeline to improve infrastructure within the city, Truong said.

(Source: Malaysia Star - Malaysia, Dated 28th December 2008)