

# THE NATION

## **The tourism business in Southeast Asia is expected to grow 6% a year**

Suchat Sritama, Singapore, October 20, 2011

DAVID Scowsill, president and chief executive officer of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), said yesterday that the key markets driving the region were China, Indonesia, India, Malaysia and Thailand. China alone is expected to leap ahead 9 per cent per year.

According to the WTTC, China will contribute one-third of total tourist numbers by 2021, rising from 58 million this year to 125 million in 10 years.

Scowsill said global tourism was now calculated at 9 per cent of gross domestic product, overshadowing the automobile industry's 8 per cent. Banking remains the king at 11 per cent.

Global tourism was up 3.3 per cent last year and was initially projected to add 4.5 per cent this year before the correction.

"However, Asean is the fastest-growing market in the world," he said.

Aviation in the region will soar along with cruises and car rentals.

"The cruise business has been growing during the last five years, while the car-rental business in Asia-Pacific was the biggest, ahead of the US," he said.

The Asia-Pacific region also originates 18 per cent of online bookings.

Heavy investment in the meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) business is apparent in Thailand, Singapore and in China, Scowsill said.

Raimund Hosch, president and CEO of Messe Berlin, which organises the world's biggest tourism trade fair, ITB Berlin in Germany, and also ITB Asia in Singapore, said tourism had emerged from the recession in 2009 and entered the recovery period this year.

"Asia is the fastest-growing region as seen by many hotel investments," he said.

## SE Asia Tourism Growth Set to Buck Sluggishness – The Nation, Oct 2011

ITB Asia, which is running this week, is being used by many countries to rebuild their tourism industry and raise their profile, he said. Malaysia occupies the biggest space to promote products, while Japan is the joint host and hopes to restore tourism after business plummeted in March.

This year's event has drawn tourism organisations and operators from 70 countries and 6,000 attendees, including 10 countries joining for the first time such as Finland, Iraq and Croatia.

Paul Brown, president of global brands and commercial services for Hilton Worldwide, said one of most importance keys to achieving business success today was building long-term relationships with customers. This includes face-to-face meetings despite the need to use new technology for better communications as well as videoconferences.

Hilton has pointed out that 85 per cent of executives still need face-to-face talks to maintain relationships and communicate directly with customers.

According to a study by the University of California at Los Angeles, 90 per cent of human communications in business talks are non-verbal, particularly in the MICE business.