

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NCIA AND LADA TEAM UP TO SUPPORT LANGKAWI TOURISM INDUSTRY

Langkawi, 14 September – In anticipation of the Langkawi Domestic Tourism Travel Bubble pilot project set to be launched on 16 September 2021, the Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA) together with the Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) organised the *Majlis Gerak Kerja Penggiat Industri Pelancongan Langkawi Bersama NCIA dan LADA Sempena Pembukaan Gelembung Perjalanan Pelancongan Domestik* to augment rejuvenation efforts for the domestic tourism industry in Langkawi.

Attended by LADA Chief Executive Officer, Tuan Haji Nasaruddin bin Abdul Muttalib and NCIA Chief Executive, Datuk Seri Jebasingam Issace John, the event saw tourism industry players in Langkawi given recognition and certificates of participation for the Northern Corridor Economic Region's (NCER) integrated Human Capital Programmes, namely JomKerja@NCER, JomNiaga@NCER and entrepreneurNCER.

These programmes are aligned with 'NCER's Strategic Development Plan 2021-2025 (SDP 2021-2025) COVID-19 Impact and Mitigation Strategies, Projects, and Programmes' approved by the government to spur economic growth and address regional imbalances in NCER with special focus on mitigating the impact of COVID-19.

"This strategic collaboration between LADA and NCIA substantiates the Government's efforts to assist companies and workers in the local tourism industry recover from the impact of the on-going pandemic through the various NCER human capital programmes implemented," said LADA Chief Executive Officer, Tuan Haji Nasaruddin bin Abdul Muttalib.

"The tourism industry players in Langkawi are looking forward to the reopening of Langkawi after enduring over 20 months of stagnation," he added.

In aiding in the need for a skilled workforce that matches the requirements of the tourism industry in Langkawi, JomKerja@NCER is a human capital incentivisation programme designed for companies in NCER to employ and train retrenched workers, unemployed graduates, and school leavers. NCIA has set a target for 100 new participants to join this programme in 2021.

Among the first to join and receive the JomKerja@NCER incentives were Tropical Charters Sdn. Bhd., Malibest Resort Sdn. Bhd. and Explicit Eco Marine Sdn. Bhd.

Tropical Charters Sdn Bhd is an award-winning travel agency that provides boat tours, recreational activities as well as destination management services to cater for events being held in Langkawi. Its Chief Executive Officer, Dato' Alexander said that the pandemic has indeed hit the tourism industry very hard. Nevertheless, he is optimistic that the industry will bounce back and that the incentives from NCER are much welcomed as tour operators will need a lot of support to get back on their feet again.

Malibest Resort Sdn. Bhd., a well-known hotelier in Langkawi is another beneficiary of the JomKerja@NCER programme. Director, Encik Abd Manaf bin Majid said that he is thankful that Langkawi was chosen for the Domestic Travel Bubble project and is excited to see Langkawi teeming with tourists again. "The incentives given by NCER will help provide tourist operators with the extra boost needed to cater for the sudden flow of tourists arriving in the coming weeks," he added. Encik Abd Manaf also noted that they have already received more than one thousand bookings since the announcement was made by the YAB Prime Minister a few days ago.

Explicit Eco Marine Sdn. Bhd., operator of Perdana Quay Eco Marine Park is yet another example of companies benefiting from the JomKerja@NCER programme. "We at Explicit Group of Companies are indeed grateful to have received this assistance from NCER and we gladly welcome these initiatives as it shows that NCIA, LADA, and the State have not forgotten about Langkawi and the tourism industry here. Tourist attraction operators are obviously finding it a challenge to retain and hire staff as the uncertainty from the pandemic as well as travel restrictions have had a direct impact on staff count," said Managing Director, Kevin Foo Chian Wei.

Another NCER incentive programme, JomNiaga@NCER is a fast-track human capital programme focusing on reskilling and upskilling for unemployed youths, women and retrenched workers in the B40 category. To date, there have been 375 new entrepreneurs in Langkawi who have completed training, received a "business kit" and have started generating income.

Also, under JomNiaga@NCER, are currently four (4) SMEs that have created 19 new hires in Langkawi. Two other recently approved recipients are Ambang Usaha Enterprise, Mega Water Sports Sdn. Bhd. and Suria Pulau Enterprise which will benefit from wage incentives of up to RM1,000 per worker for 12 months.

“Through this programme, we are able to pay our staff their full monthly salaries despite being under pressure during the COVID-19 period. We are thankful to NCIA and the State and hope this programme will continue until the economy fully recovers,” said Encik Fauzan bin Yaacob, owner of Ambang Usaha Enterprise.

Mega Water Sports Sdn. Bhd. Managing Director, Encik Hussein bin Mohd Said echoed the preceding industry views that the tourism industry in Langkawi is deeply grateful for the assistance given by NCIA. “I am thankful and excited that Langkawi is now open for business. It has been too long that Langkawi has not seen any tourists on its beaches,” he said. He added that the company has already started to receive bookings from holiday makers prior to the reopening of Langkawi as a tourist destination.

Suria Pulau Enterprise, a small food and beverage and catering company located in Kuah, Langkawi currently has seven employees on its payroll and now plans to hire seven more new employees with the incentive from NCIA.

NCIA urges businesses in the Langkawi tourism industry to participate in the JomKerja@NCER and JomNiaga@NCER programmes and continue the hiring process and retaining of workers.

There is also the entrepreneurNCER programme which provides qualified businesses with soft loans via a 50% topping up on bank interest rates, through a strategic collaboration with Maybank and Agrobank.

A total of 147 microenterprises and SMEs from sectors comprising wholesale and retail, services and agriculture in Langkawi have benefited from a total financing of RM4.4 million as of 31 July 2021, which were mostly to support working capital requirements and sustain businesses.

Two approved recipients of entrepreneurNCER, De Baron Holidays Sdn. Bhd. received loan assistance through the NCIA–Maybank Entrepreneur Scheme while Helang Kaya Enterprise received loan assistance via the NCIA–Agrobank Entrepreneur Scheme.

De Baron Holidays Sdn. Bhd. owner, Encik Muhammad Zulhaimi bin Romli applauded NCIA and LADA’s efforts in helping business owners such as himself obtain much-needed loans from banks to stay in business. “It is hard for anyone to apply for a loan from banks during this pandemic, and it is even more challenging for the tourist industry with the Movement Control Order (MCO). The loan will indeed help me sustain my business to pay for operational expenses as tourists will now be coming back to Langkawi,” he said.

In agreement with Encik Muhammad Zulhaimi, Helang Kaya Enterprise owner, Encik Mohd Razif bin Shariff said that he welcomes the initiatives under the entrepreneur NCER programme. “We are thankful for the support provided by NCIA. At this moment, everyone in the travel industry is badly affected by the pandemic, and loan initiatives like this provide us with the financial assistance that we need,” he added.

“The programmes offered to the Langkawi tourism industry by NCIA is part of our goal to play a strategic role in rejuvenating the tourism economy in the region which is about to recover from the pandemic,” said Datuk Seri Issace.

“NCIA is committed to see Langkawi’s tourism industry and economy recover from the current pandemic situation. We hope that our programmes will benefit the *Rakyat* in Langkawi holistically in providing income through more jobs, business opportunities and alleviating current hardship due to the pandemic. We also have plans to offer our Human Capital Programmes to tourism players in other tourist destinations in the NCER when the time comes,” he added after witnessing the virtual event together with LADA officials and NCIA.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

About NCIA

The Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA) is a regional development authority responsible for establishing directions, devising policies and strategies related to the socioeconomic development of the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER). Incorporated in June 2008 under the Northern Corridor Implementation Authority Act 2008 (Act 687), NCER encompasses the four northern states of Kedah, Penang, Perak and Perlis in Peninsular Malaysia. NCIA’s Chief Executive is Datuk Seri Jebasingam Issace John.

NCIA drives the growth of NCER towards becoming an excellent economic region while catalysing and implementing high value-added development programmes in six (6) economic clusters: Manufacturing, Agribusiness, Petrochemical, Mining, Green Economy and Services (Inc. Tourism; Logistics and Connectivity; and Digital Economy).

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