The Electric New Paper:

'Shed your fears, visit Johor'

Fears of crime keep a million S’poreans from Malaysian state last year

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The team, comprising heads of state security agencies and tourism-related organisations, will be here to woo Singaporeans to visit the state as numbers of Singapore tourists have been dwindling.

Concerns about crime in Johor kept away about a million Singaporeans from visiting the Malaysian state, reported the New Straits Times.

It equated to a loss of about RM225 million ($98.94m) for the state.

Johor state executive councillor Freddy Long said convincing the Singapore tourists that it was safe to visit Johor was the first the step.

'We want to thrash out issues, including fears among Singaporeans about security in the state,' he said.

The Johor delegation, including the state police chief, immigration and customs directors and the state mayor, want to assure Singaporeans that:

- Johor is safe for tourists,
- Singapore cars are not targeted by Johor Baru city council enforcement units, and
- Malaysian Customs and Immigration authorities are not 'singling out' Singaporeans for harsh treatment.

Singapore tour agents have scaled back tours to the Malaysian state because of fears about the safety of visitors.

There has been a 14 per cent drop in visitor arrivals last year.

Besides business travellers, there has been a drop in student excursions and visits by senior citizens organised by Singapore community development councils.

The visit is part of what is being seen as a ‘Johor Mini Travel Mart’, with hard selling by no fewer than 50 tourism product owners in Johor Baru.

Mr Long, who heads the state's tourism portfolio, said the mart was a move by the state government to alleviate fears among Singaporeans and assure them it was safe to visit Johor.

Some 23,500 Singaporeans visit Johor everyday with the causeway being the main entry point.

These visitors spend RM5.3m daily which works to about RM225 per visitor.

During the first 10 months of last year, 7.6 million visitors from Singapore entered Malaysia through Johor.