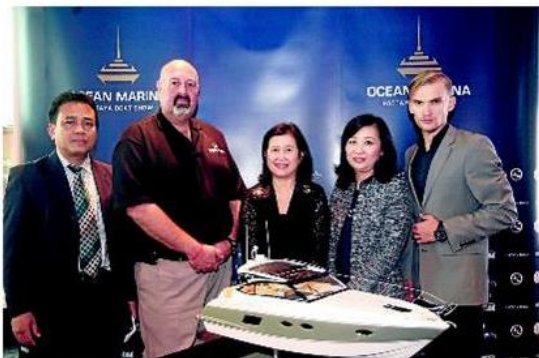


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TOURISM



Wilaiwan Thawitsri, deputy governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (centre), joins other TAT officials and executives from the private sector in announcing the 2013 Ocean Marina Pattaya Boat Show recently.

TAT keen on yachties

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) foresees growth in the marine tourism sector on the east coast, which it hopes will help the agency promote high-end tourism in Pattaya.

Wilaiwan Thawitsri, TAT deputy governor for tourism products and business, said Thailand is a popular destination for marine tourists, with many chartering yachts cruising in Thailand and neighbouring countries.

She said the country has well-

developed marine infrastructure with quality yacht maintenance service and international standard marinas that can cater to all sizes of yachts.

Pattaya has become a top marine tourism site in Thailand, in large part due to the Ocean Marina Yacht Club.

On Tuesday the club will host the three-day 2013 Ocean Marina Pattaya Boat Show. About 100 exhibitors from the marine, marine tourism and leisure and lifestyle business sectors will join the event.

Yacht brokers predict the number of yachts visiting Thailand will increase by about 30% to 2,100 yachts by 2016.

Marine tourism is a high-end segment, with tourists who stay in five-star resorts and dine in upscale restaurants. Each year, the country receives 110 luxury yachts or superyachts, and these are some of the biggest tourist spenders.

The TAT predicted by 2016, 190 superyachts will visit Thailand annually, generating handsome income for Thailand's marine industry.

The popularity of Pattaya, Hua Hin, and Koh Samui continues to grow, reaching 8.5 million foreign visitors last year. This number is expected to grow 10% year-on-year, thanks to tourists from Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore and China.