THE Malaysian Centre for Tourism and Hospitality Education (MyCenTHE) is stepping up efforts to improve tourism and hospitality education on the local front by launching East West International College (EWIC) as its fourth cluster leader for Negri Sembilan.

In line with this, the college has pledged 50 scholarships to help deserving students build a career in tourism and hospitality.

Second Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh commended the college and MyCenTHE for their commitment towards nurturing skilled tourism personnel in the industry. "The Malaysian Centre for Tourism and Hospitality Education is spearheading efforts to reshape tourism and hospitality education through a government initiative, namely, the Entry Point Project 10," said Idris.

The project’s aim includes increasing the annual output of hospitality workers to 50,000 people by the year 2020, more than double from 20,000 people in the year 2009.

Other cluster leaders that have been launched are in Penang, headed by KDU University College; Sabah, managed by INTI College Sabah; and Sarawak, headed by UCSI University.

The tourism sector has grown rapidly over the years and UCSI University founder Datuk Peter Ng said the Tourism and Culture Ministry has reported a 7.9% growth in this year’s January to June tourist arrivals — an increase of 920,253 in total — as compared to last year.

"This (growth) demands for quality hospitality and tourism personnel that are efficient and well-versed in industry know-how, which is why MyCenTHE has been aggressively promoting Work-based Learning (WBL)," said Ng. "Students will not be restricted to only theoretical lessons, but will have opportunities to be exposed to the real working world under the tutelage of industry experts, thereby bridging the gap between the industry and academia."

The WBL curriculum is a unique approach that MyCenTHE member institutions strongly advocate to ensure that learners are exposed to real-life practices in the workplace.

This view was echoed by EWIC chief executive officer Prof Datuk Dr Abdul Murad Ahmad.

Also present at the launch was MyCenTHE acting president Lu Huong Ying.
Creating opportunities: (from left) Prof Abdul Murad, Idris, Prof Khalid and Lu at the launch.