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Association: Midnight ruling could affect tourism in Langkawi

ALOR STAR, Fri. - The Langkawi Tourism Association has appealed to the Government to reconsider its decision not to exempt the duty free island from the close-by-midnight ruling for entertainment outlets.

A spokesman for the LTA said the ruling could affect tourist arrivals, especially those from Taiwan, Korea and Singapore. He said local tourism could also be affected.

"This is because unlike tourists from Europe, who come more for the beach and the sun, those from Korea and Taiwan visit the island to enjoy themselves by visiting entertainment outlets or to shop," the spokesman said.

He said the midnight ruling could also discourage Malaysians from visiting the island.

Statistics from the Langkawi District Council for tourist arrivals showed 1.7 million people visited the island last year.

Tourists from Thailand topped the list with 72,610 arrivals followed by those from Singapore (9,350) and Taiwan (3,590).

Meanwhile, entertainment operators also voiced their concern over the ruling and claimed they might be forced to close shop if it was not reviewed.

In Penang, the State Youth Council today called on the Government to stop entertainment spots from holding promotions, like Ladies Nite aimed at attracting girls to patronise the places without having to pay cover charge.

Its secretary Mohd Haniffa Abdul Hamid said some spots even offered free drinks to women, including underaged female patrons, during Ladies Nite.

He said the council also welcomed the statement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in Alor Star yesterday that operators of nightspots whose patrons were caught taking dadah in their premises could be charged with dadah trafficking.

He said the proposed law would help to make nightspot owners more responsible in ensuring that nothing unlawful happened in their premises.

Mohd Haniffa also welcomed the move for nightspots to close by midnight saying that this would help improve family relations.

He said closing nightspots by midnight would not have an adverse effect on the tourism industry as only a small percentage of foreign tourists frequented nightspots.

Secretary of the Penang branch of the National Union of the Teaching Profession Abdul Karim Majid said nightspots was one of the main factors for the drastic rise in social ills among youths.

"It is only rarely that one hears of nightspots promoting healthy and educational activities," he said, adding that most of them preferred to promote activities glorifying sex, alcohol, tobacco and other vices.

In Kuala Lumpur, the Kedah Youth Council in a statement said it had directed its 25 affiliates to implement immediately beneficial programmes for the youths.

Its president Senator Datuk Zainol Abidin Johari said non-governmental organisations, especially youth movements and associations, should play a more active role to arrest social problems among the Malays.

"Such organisations should adopt a more serious approach in tackling these problems. In fact, it should be turned into their main agenda."

Zainol Abidin was commenting on the call by Dr Mahathir who had urged

the Malays to re-examine themselves and become good citizens at a function last night.

Dr Mahathir had also said it was not proper for them to blame the society's development for the many Malays involved in criminal and anti-social activities in the country.

Zainol Abidin added the council's exco had also agreed to carry out a study of the lifestyle of youths with the collaboration of Universiti Utara Malaysia.

Meanwhile, the DAP has proposed that the Government institute a comprehensive study of the impact of rapid economic and material growth on the country, including looking into the causes of various social ills confronting society.

Its national vice-chairman and Kepong MP Dr Tan Seng Giaw said once these had been identified, solutions to problems of increasing crime rate, abandoned babies, drug addiction, school dropouts and loitering could be determined.

He said the Government could then formulate short- and long-term solutions consistent with the needs of the plural society.

He claimed ad hoc actions such as restricting the operating hours of entertainment centres as taken by several local authorities recently was only a form of publicity and might not even touch the surface of the social problems.

"There is rapid economic and material development in the country while spiritual development has not kept pace with it. The short- and long-term impact of economic and material development is immense."

As these social problems would get worse, Dr Tan said the party believed the Government should pay special attention to them, learning from other countries and avoiding their mistakes.

In Seremban, Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad said the State would come up with a programme to tackle social problems.

He said the committee overseeing social matters would meet next week to discuss inputs for the proposed programme.

He said government departments, agencies and non-governmental organisations represented in the committee would also present their programmes.

"The committee will decide on integrating the proposals into one special programme for implementation," he said after chairing the State Islamic Affairs Council meeting at the Baitulmal building.

Mohamad Isa said the programme was necessary to instil awareness among the people, especially youths to discard negative values which, if left unchecked could affect the Government's nation-building programmes.

He said the authorities concerned had also been directed to intensify enforcement to tackle the problem effectively.

Meanwhile, he welcomed the Prime Minister's call to prosecute entertainment outlet operators who allowed their premises to be turned into dadah distribution centres.

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