

# Call to end exit tax within Asean region

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**LANGKAWI:** Asean countries should consider doing away with exit tax to encourage people to travel within the region, Tourism Malaysia director-general Kamaruddin Siaraf said.

He said that other than visa-free travel within the region, the abolishment of this tax would also stimulate travel.

"We should look at facilitating travel and any kind of hindrance to travel should be addressed by the grouping," he said.

He said Indonesia had recently taken the initiative to remove exit tax for its citizens coming to Malaysia via the entry points of Penang, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Malacca.

"It is hoped that by the end of the year, any point of entry by Indonesians to Malaysia will not be subject to exit tax.

"Neighbours in the region which currently impose exit tax may perhaps want to review the requirement to promote

intra-Asean travel," he said.

Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tourists, whether they were from South-East Asia or outside the region, should enjoy a single visa privilege for easier travel within the region.

"It will be wonderful to be able to travel in South-East Asia with one visa, one procedure and one special lane," he said, adding that such an arrangement would benefit Asean.

Dr Mahathir said in his keynote address at the Asean Tourism Forum here that travel would be made easier via a single visa.

"Of course there is the security aspect to consider but we must also address the issue of promoting travel," he said.

He also suggested that Asean countries introduce a common form of greeting to distinguish South-East Asia from the rest of the world.

"This is something that will help the tourist trade in the region," Dr Mahathir added.