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Help bankers understand industry

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The banking sector should understand the problems and challenges faced by other industries for smoother business relationships.

Affin Merchant Bank Bhd president and chief executive officer Datin Zuraidah Atan said bankers did not necessarily have deep knowledge of the workings of other industries.

"The tourism industry should instead educate bankers and make them understand just how things are," she said.

She was speaking after presenting findings of a discussion on Tourism: Support From Financial Sector at a plenary session chaired by New Straits Times Sdn Bhd group editor Datuk Ahmad A. Talib.

She was one of five moderators at the Travel Times Tourism Dialogue today, which was organised by the NST and the National Tourism Council Malaysia.

At the discussion, Zuraidah said, delegates had also suggested tax exemptions and faster loan application processes.

"Tax exemptions could be given for tourism activities aimed at promoting Malaysia as a tourist destination.

"The process of loan applications should also be simplified and shortened," she said.

While presenting the findings earlier, she said that incentive programmes should be made available to possibly promote mergers within the smaller industry players.

"This would result in more competitiveness and give access to special funds," she said.

Another moderator, wireless broadband-provider Airzed Networks Sdn Bhd executive chairman Mukhriz Mahathir, who moderated the session on Tourism Promotion: Are They Effective? suggested a high level task force be formed to focus on crisis management.

"From our experience, something happens every year and the industry needs to be more resilient and not depend on good times anymore," he said.

Out of the discussion, Mukhriz said, was also the realisation that Malaysia was lacking in research data on tourist profiles.

"We want to know exactly what types of people come here, how much they spend, what they see and enjoy because while we may have certain ideas on what they think, reality might differ," he said.

Earlier when presenting the group's findings, he said that research and development should be conducted on a regular basis and the data be related to the industry on a timely basis.

He also said that it was important to maintain consistency in promotional efforts overseas, but efforts should be made to target specific markets of tourists.

"Under the Malaysia Truly Asia umbrella, we would still like to have tactical advertisements which specifically targeted other markets," he said, adding that although such activities were being carried out now, they needed honing.

Bernama's executive editor Azman Ujang who moderated the Tourism: Managing Crises' session, said the group identified key issues such as identifying crises before they actually happened.

"We should also counter foreign media reports, not by suppressing the information or telling them what to report, but by countering with a true perspective of things from our side," he said, citing the haze issue some

years ago as an example.

He added that local media should also be more balanced in its reporting.