

## **Street demos don't hurt tourism, says Nazri**

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**By Hazlan Zakaria**

The recent rise of "illegal" street demonstrations in Malaysia does not adversely impact tourism in general, says new Tourism Minister Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz.

"I do not think that it will have an effect, as it is now we are registering an increase in tourist numbers and tourism income," he told reporters at a press conference in Putrajaya today.

NONENazri (right) argued that scientific dissection of tourism data shows no impact from street demonstrations.

"Over the years, the trend is that every year there is an increase in tourists and tourism income. The trend is always upward, except in 2003, because of SARS and the global economic meltdown.

"Following that trend, between 2008 until now, there have been many illegal demonstrations that took place, but these did not decrease tourist numbers and tourism income."

Several government leaders have often warned that frequent demonstrations would scare away foreign tourists.

'Utusan-AirAsia spat no impact on tourism'

On a related matter, asked whether the recent open spat between Umno-owned Malay language daily Utusan Malaysia and budget airline AirAsia would affect Malaysia's budget air travel industry, and indirectly tourism, he dismissed any such worry.

"Well, about Utusan Malaysia (and its spat with AirAsia), we are talking about bringing in foreign tourists. I don't think foreigners read Utusan Malaysia. So no, I don't think there will be (any effect).

air asia airasia aircraftUtusan has began to attack AirAsia after the chief executive of its linked carrier AirAsia X criticised the Malay newspaper's recent racially charged editorial slant.

The daily ran editorials urging a boycott of AirAsia as well as news items critical of

the airline and alleged incidents of bad service from it.

Asked to respond on possible disconnects with opposition-ruled states, Nazri gave his assurance that his ministry would also work hand-in-hand with Pakatan Rakyat-held states, "as in tourism, we should set politics aside".

"I have done a thorough study and I found out that Selangor, Kelantan and Penang are still part of Malaysia," he jokingly said, adding that his ministry would be inclusive in all its practices, as per Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's national reconciliation directive.

Asked about the vacant post of deputy minister in his ministry, Nazri said that as of now no decision has been made by the cabinet, which met earlier today.

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