

Fight 'falsehood' on M'sia: PM to tour operators

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has urged tour operators to help counter 'misconceptions' about Malaysia, especially those that are spread online.

Speaking at a function organised by the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Operators (Matta) in Kuala Lumpur today, he said this must be done to ensure tourists are not put off from travelling to Malaysia.

"[...] Matta and its members also have a role to play to help project the truth about the country to the markets abroad, so that misconceptions and negative views grounded in falsehood – especially as spread through social media – can be corrected and tourists are not put off from visiting the country," he said.

Najib said this during a dialogue session with the industry group, which was themed 'An hour with the prime minister'.

The prime minister however did not explain what misconceptions and falsehoods he was referring to.

Najib's call to counter falsehoods about Malaysia is among several points he raised in his speech, which among others had outlined Malaysia's strengths and challenges in the tourism industry amid a global economic downturn.

"Our renowned Malaysian hospitality and culture of service, our rich natural heritage, our cultural diversity, and of course now more than ever, the value for money that foreign tourists will experience in Malaysia compared to many other destinations because of the exchange rates.

"All of these are still huge selling points that need to be amplified and communicated across all channels to drive up tourism number," he said.

Stimulate immediate economic growth

Najib also assured that the government would work together with the industry to develop Malaysia's tourism sector.

A cabinet committee on tourism may be re-convened soon to tackle cross-ministerial issues needed that arise, he said.

Earlier during the function, Matta president Hamzah Rahmat urged the government to classify domestic flights and airport taxes and 'zero-rated' under the goods and services tax (GST) scheme, arguing that air travel should be considered an essential service.

“This will undoubtedly provide much-needed relief to consumers, reinvigorate domestic tourism, and stimulate immediate economic growth and recovery.

“As part as our ongoing efforts, Matta will continue to work with the relevant authorities to find effective solutions to this and other outstanding GST-related issues,” he said, while also lauding GST’s implementation in April.

Najib assured that the government is aware of Matta’s proposals, and through the Tourism and Culture Ministry, all proposals would be given due consideration.

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