

Minister urged to apologise for 'misleading' Parliament
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Tourism Minister Azalina Othman Said has been asked to apologise for allegedly misleading Parliament when she made false statements about a PKR representative, which were aired live on RTM1 and carried in several newspapers and blogs today.

Elizabeth Wong, Selangor exco for Tourism, Consumer Affairs and Environment said Azalina had misled the house in saying that she (Wong) did not attend the opening of an event organised by the Tourism Ministry.

The tourism minister had also claimed that Wong declined an invitation to an official event in Pulau Carey and that she (Wong) had lied to Shah Alam MP Khalid Samad.

"For the record, I was present at the Zoom event where Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was also present. I even had an opportunity to talk to Abdullah.

"I was never invited to go to Pulau Carey with Azalina and in fact, Azalina herself has never stepped foot on the island. I am aghast at all the false statements made by Azalina," said Wong in a statement today.

Wong added that she has so far not been invited to any event organised by the Selangor Tourism Action Council.

"I call on the minister to apologise publicly for her statements as her assertions and insinuations have gravely affected my credibility as a state exco and that of the Selangor government.

"Failure to do so will compel me to refer Azalina to the House Committee of Privileges for censure."

Wong added that since the March general election, there has been limited communication and co-operation between the ministry and Pakatan Rakyat-led states.

"The disconnection between the state governments and state Tourism Action Councils is glaringly unproductive and unhealthy.

"Further, the signal sent to the tourism industry is extremely negative and jeopardises the tradition of close collaboration between the state governments and related government agencies."

Unhealthy relationship

She said Azalina as tourism minister should be looking at ways to revamp the current communication breakdown and foster closer and productive ties with state governments, regardless of political affiliation.

"To carry on with this current mode of operations and communications is detrimental to the nation," said Wong.

"Tourism is a national agenda and all parties should be mindful that success in this sector needs proper official channels and access to plans, programmes and decision-making by the state governments and the tourism ministry.

"Political interference serves only personal agendas. To this end, I have from very beginning, instructed state officials, including local councils, to co-operate fully with the ministry."

Nonetheless, Wong said excos from Pakatan states will continue to soldier on despite the odds, as "we are mindful of the national importance of tourism to the economic health and wealth of the nation".

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