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Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** handing an award to Global Geoparks Network vice-president **Professor Datuk Dr Ibrahim Komoo** in Langkawi yesterday. Bernama pic

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'Turn Langkawi into Monaco of the East'

LANGKAWI: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday stressed on the need for Langkawi to attract more high-net-worth tourists.

He said high-end tourism on the island had not been fully developed.

"There are pockets of it, but we have not reached the level we aspire to," he said, referring to luxury hotel St Regis, which will open its doors in April next year, together with a Michelin-starred restaurant, a first for the island.

"I would like to see Langkawi emerge as the 'Monaco of the East' for high-net-worth tourists, while maintaining its appeal for mass tourism."

He said turning the island into a high-end destination for tourists with deep pockets would spur multiplier effects in the economy, such as the creation of high-paying jobs.

"I would like to see two-tier development in Langkawi; one for mass tourism and the other for high-net-worth tourists," he said in his opening speech at the Langkawi International Tourism Awards at the Langkawi International Convention Centre here last night.

Present were Langkawi Development Authority chief executive officer Tan Sri Khalid Ramli, Treasury secretary-general Tan Sri Dr Mohd Irwan Serigar Abdullah and Kedah executive councillor Datuk Dr Ku Abd Rahman Ku Ismail.

Najib said he hoped that the Langkawi Tourism Development Blueprint 2.0 would be ready in the near future, which would give a clear direction and boost confidence in the private sector to invest.

He said the island had a tremendous future, adding that he hoped to see it grow as a destination.

"Langkawi must have a strong brand. We have to think of what constitutes the kind of imagery needed for people to recognise and remember Langkawi as a famous tourist destination."

He said the island's safety and peaceful environment were strong selling points.

Najib later presented awards, namely for Best Homestay, Best Bed and Breakfast, Best Geopark Community, Best Tourism Village, Best Community Leader, Best Geopark Non-Governmental Organisation Partner, Best Man-Made Attraction, Best Natural Attraction, Best 4-Star and Best 5-Star, as well as a Special Award.

The night also belonged to New Straits Times Press stringer Hamzah Othman, who won the Best Tourism Article award for a story on the 3D Museum here.