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Newspaper	The Star
Date	19 December 2015

'Make Langkawi shine'

The Star - 19/12/2015

PM calls on tourism players to up the ante and draw more visitors

LANGKAWI: Since Langkawi has bagged accolades such as the "Fifth Most Insanely Gorgeous Beaches in the World", Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak wants the tourism players here to go up a gear.

"You have succeeded as a mass tourism destination, and now you must achieve the status of a high-end tourism gem.

"There are pockets of it, but we have not reached the level that we should aspire to," he said at the 5th Langkawi Tourism Awards (Lita) yesterday.

Najib said he had mentioned a few years ago that he would like to see Langkawi as the "Monaco of the East".

"You must have a two-tier development concept. Maintain certain areas to complement mass tourism which is still needed and perhaps designate certain areas as upmarket," he said.

Najib had the crowd chuckling with his definition of high net worth tourists.

"If you need to ask for the price of a Rolls Royce, then you cannot afford it. You want these kind of people to be your tourists. They come here, they don't ask for discounts and they book the best rooms.



Guests of honour: Najib and Khalid Ramli (behind Najib in blue tie) arriving at the Langkawi Tourism Awards. — LIM BENG TATT/The Star

"And because they are here, then you will have the high-end shopping, the ancillary support services for them and the high-paying jobs," he said.

He urged the Langkawi Development Authority (Lada) to give focus to high-end tourism in the next tourism blueprint for the island.

Lada chief executive officer Tan Sri Khalid Ramli said Lita 2015

marked the final year of the Langkawi Tourism Blueprint launched by Najib in 2011.

"In 2014, we received 3.6 million tourists, RM50.4bil in revenue, RM11bil in investments and 7,600 new jobs.

"The increase in tourists does not include day-trip visitors. We only count them if they spent the night in Langkawi," he said.

Lita saw 29 award recipients from 179 nominees, covering all the hotel star levels plus homestay and bed-and-breakfast set-ups.

There were four awards for restaurants, six awards for geopark players including Best NGO Partner and Best Community Leader as well as individual awards for Best Taxi Driver, Best Boat Operator, Best Tourist Guide and Best Blogger.