

PM: Well-trained cabbies will improve tourists' perception of Malaysia
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PUTRAJAYA: A well-trained stable of taxi drivers will help shape and improve tourists' perception of the country, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said thousands of taxi drivers nationwide interacted with tourists every day, making them an important first point of contact with foreign visitors.

"If taxi drivers are polite, courteous and customer-friendly, speak good things about the country and show a positive attitude, tourists will feel welcomed.

"Tourists meet thousands of taxi drivers and through their interactions, tourists' perception of Malaysia is formed," he said yesterday at the launch of the Taxi Tourism Ambassadors programme at Dataran Putra here.

Over 500 taxi drivers turned up for the launch, which was also attended by Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen and Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) chairman Tan Sri Syed Hamid Albar.

The Government aims to train some 4,000 taxi drivers, who will be selected to attend a one-day course at the Malaysian Tourism Centre to learn how to become effective tourism ambassadors.

Najib noted that the Government had also not forgotten about the welfare of taxi drivers, repeating his pledge to come up with a new model that would give taxi drivers better earnings and more independence in their work.

Syed Hamid, when met after the programme launch, said SPAD was finalising the new mechanism to allow taxi drivers to get individual permits and perks such as Socso protection.

Last week, Najib announced plans to implement a new model for the taxi industry within two years, that would allow them to get individual permits.

The Government will also dole out RM35mil in aid annually, which includes a two-year RM520 tyre subsidy for 67,000 budget, airport and executive taxis and hired cars under the Teksi Rakyat 1Malaysia programme.

Also included under the programme is a RM1mil fund for a personal accident insurance scheme to afford protection for over 100,000 taxi drivers nationwide.

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