

Tourism industry should promote Malaysia's selling points, stress on value for money, says Najib
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KUALA LUMPUR, The value for money that foreign tourists will experience in Malaysia is among the many "selling points" that need to be communicated by the tourism industry, including the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (Matta), to boost travel numbers, the Prime Minister said today.

Datuk Seri Najib Razak said it was also important that the industry's stakeholders believed that both Malaysia's economic and tourism fundamentals were strong and that key strengths of these fundamentals needed to be marketed and presented well to existing and potential markets.

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

"All of these are huge selling points that need to be amplified and communicated across all channels to drive up tourism numbers," he said in his speech at Matta's "An Hour with the Prime Minister" event at Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) today.

Najib added Matta also played a role in helping to project the "truth" about the country to foreign markets and deflect "misconceptions and negative views grounded in falsehood" so that tourists were not put off from visiting Malaysia.

"We will need to examine and resolve specific issues that would make us more competitive.

"Incentives may need to be revised and immigration issues like visa-on-arrival and visa fees and also electronic visas need to be revisited with a view of making it easier for certain categories of tourists to enter the country."

Earlier in his speech, Matta president Hamzah Rahmat also expressed the need to "streamline" electronic visa systems, following in the footsteps of Australia.

"This will also allow the promotion of multiple entry visas and encourage tourists to visit our shores repeatedly and to tour the length and breadth of the country, from the east to the west of Malaysia.

"It is our belief that improving our visa systems is the key to achieving our 2020 target of 36 million arrivals," added Hamzah.

Meanwhile, Najib also acknowledged the drop in tourist arrivals in the first quarter of this year, saying it was due to uncontrollable factors such as Malaysia's airline tragedies and the floods earlier this year.

Another factor was the vagaries of the global economy that he said impacted not only Malaysia, but also other Asean countries.

"Needless to say, the government takes this matter very seriously and we are continuously monitoring the situation while looking at immediate measures to address the problem."

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