

**Malaysia Needs Both Mass, High End Tourism - PM Najib
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LANGKAWI, Jan 24 (Bernama) -- Malaysia needs both mass tourism and high-end tourism to further develop the economy, and the government is ready to work on it, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said the government had to plan to cater for both groups and Langkawi, as a main tourist destination in this country, could offer the potentials for both mass and high-end tourism.

"I see Langkawi as a gem that is priceless to the nation," he said in his speech during a welcoming ceremony for the inaugural AirAsia flight from Guangzhou, China to Langkawi at the Langkawi International Airport, here Sunday.

Also present were Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mukhriz Tun Dr Mahathir, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiow Lai, Kedah State Exco Member Datuk Mohd Rawi Abdul Hamid, Langkawi Member of Parliament Datuk Nawawi Ahmad, AirAsia Berhad Executive Chairman Datuk Kamarudin Meranun, AirAsia Group Chief Executive Officer Tan Sri Tony Fernandes and AirAsia Berhad Chief Executive Officer Aireen Omar.

najib said the government was ready to attract more tourists including high-end tourists, and as a pro-business government, it wanted to see more private sectors playing their part and supporting more goals.

"The people also need a government like this to be around so that the private sector, Langkawi, Kedah and the nation will continue to develop and sustain. This will signify the next level of growth and development in Langkawi," he said.

However, Najib said efforts to attract more tourists would not succeed without the connectivity to tourist destinations, in this case Langkawi.

"Despite all the attractions that we have, we cannot make it happen without connectivity. Connectivity is a fundamental factor in boosting tourism," he said.

As Langkawi managed to attract many visitors, Najib said the government believed that the demand for direct flights from Langkawi was there.

The Prime Minister said when the government planned the blueprint for Langkawi in 2011, they had thought about how to achieve this very ambitious target and the first stage was very successful.

"From 28 chartered flights when we started the blueprint in 2011, today we achieved 53 chartered flights into Langkawi. But today (the inaugural flight from Guangzhou to Langkawi) is the beginning of the next level...having direct flight.

"We need connectivity to the major sectors. China is a major source of tourism for Malaysia and also for the world," he said.

Najib also said there were huge potentials for Langkawi that had yet to be fully tapped and besides having more international passengers, Langkawi also needed more hotel rooms and better facilities including at the airport.

"We want the growth, we have to plan for that. We don't want tourists to come here and be dissatisfied. We want tourists to come here with nice feelings so that they will want to come again," he said.

The inaugural AirAsia flight from Guangzhou into Langkawi landed with a healthy 92 per cent flight load. Among the guests on board were representatives from the Guangdong Tourism Authority and members of the media.

Guangzhou is the capital and largest city of Guangdong Province in South China. The media group will proceed to experience the lure of Langkawi through a familiarisation trip jointly organised by AirAsia, the Langkawi Development Authority (LADA), The Datai Langkawi and the Starwood Hotels Group.

AirAsia currently holds a 60 per cent of the market share in Langkawi air traffic with direct flights to Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Singapore.

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