



MEDIA UPDATE

TOURISM MINISTRY ADDRESSES ISSUE OF REFUNDS FOR JAPAN TRAVEL PACKAGES

Dato' Seri Dr. Ng Yen Yen, Minister of Tourism, Malaysia, said the Ministry will have another meeting with the travel trade industry members to further discuss the issue of refunds for Japan travel packages, as the situation in Japan develops.

She added that the Ministry appreciates the cooperation received from MATTA and the airline companies, saying that it had no power to force airlines to compensate customers.

"It is all based on negotiations with the individual airlines and their gesture of goodwill," she said at a news conference after addressing delegates of the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) Conference Week at Mandarin Oriental on 21 March 2011.

"We will monitor the situation and take it one phase at a time. We will meet again in the first week of April to review the situation in Japan and make a decision for the second phase," she added.

Based on a recent negotiation, several airlines namely Malaysia Airlines, Singapore Airlines, Japan Airlines and AirAsia, have agreed that Malaysians who have purchased flight tickets for travel to Japan would either get a full refund or have their fares converted to credit points depending on the different cut-off dates issued by the respective airlines.

Dato' Ng had, on 15 March 2011, announced the different cut-off dates by the airlines following many enquiries by Malaysians who wished to cancel or postpone their trips to Japan due to the uncertain and unsafe situation in Japan.

Malaysia Airlines had agreed to a refund for flight tickets to Tokyo, Japan, purchased before 11 March for travel period up until 15 April, while Air Asia X is allowing customers

who bought tickets to Japan for flights up to 11 April to postpone their trip without imposing any surcharge, and would consider refunds on a case by case basis.

Singapore Airlines had agreed to exempt charges for refunds or postponement for confirmed flights between 11 March and 10 April. Similarly, JAL would provide a full refund without any penalty charges for flights between 11 March and 10 April to Narita, Sendai, Hanamaki, Aomori, Misawa, Yamagata, Akita, Niigata and Matsumoto.

Meanwhile, Dato' Ng said travel agents who had sold packages have agreed not to charge more than RM200 as administrative fee per tourist while the rest of the payments would be refunded.

"However, if an additional administrative fee is imposed by ground handlers in Japan, then we cannot do anything about that," she said. Dato' Ng was among the speakers at the opening session of the conference, which was also attended by Jean Todt, FIA President.

She welcomed the organising of such conferences since it provided positive impact to Malaysia's tourism industry. She acknowledged that business tourism attracts high-end and long-staying tourists.

More than 220 participants from 64 countries attended the FIA Conference, which covers issues relating to mobility and sports.

Headquartered in Paris and Geneva, the FIA is the federation of the world's leading motoring organisation and the governing body for world motor sports with membership in 132 countries.

The FIA Conference Week is held for the first time in Kuala Lumpur from 21 to 25 March 2011. The Automobile Association of Malaysia (AAM) is the host club for the World Conference Week in Malaysia.

Malaysia is currently in seventh position in Asia Pacific's MICE destination ranking. "Our KPI is to become number five in the ranking," Dato' Ng said. She added that business tourists made up five percent of Malaysia's tourist arrivals and that the Ministry's aspiration is to increase the figure to eight percent by 2020.

At the same function, Dato' Ng also addressed the issue of Integrated Strategic Communications' (ISC) claims on the "ambiguity" in Tourism Malaysia's advertising tender process, saying that on 7 February she had asked Dato' Dr Ong Hong Peng, the Ministry's Secretary General, to invite the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to conduct an investigation on Tourism Malaysia.

In response, the MACC had visited Tourism Malaysia and received the full cooperation from Tourism Malaysia's officers.

Dato' Ng is also writing a letter to request ISC's cooperation to name the officers they claimed had approached them for bribes on 19 January in exchange for "a deal".

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Email: monafairuz@motour.gov.my (Tel: 2693 7111)

or anisramli@tourism.gov.my (Tel: 2615 8188)

Website: www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my