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## Ng: Reduced flights may cost us billions in tourism revenue

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KUALA LUMPUR: The move by [Malaysia Airlines \(MAS\)](#) and [AirAsia X](#) to reduce or discontinue flights to international and regional destinations will cost the country's tourism industry billions of ringgit in revenue, said [Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen](#).

Acknowledging that the airlines had done so as part of their business plan, she said the move would nevertheless lead to a drop in tourist arrivals.

"When there is no accessibility to the country, it will be very difficult to get tourists (to visit Malaysia)," she said after launching the Malaysia Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) here yesterday.

The TSA is a set of accounts in the industry to track the contribution of each tourism activity.

Malaysia is one of 36 countries that keep the TSA, which helps the Government and industry players develop the industry as it gives indications on the types of products that will attract tourists.

Dr Ng noted that every airline had its own needs and business plan.

“What we can do is to request, persuade and put our case forward.

“However, it will be a real challenge (for us to bring more foreign visitors) and I dare say it will cost us billions of ringgit (in tourism revenue),” she said.

She said Malaysia still fell short in terms of international direct flights compared to Thailand and Singapore while Vietnam and the Philippines were increasing such flights.

To overcome this, she said the ministry would target tourists who would stay longer and spend more during their trips to Malaysia.

“We are still maintaining our target this year to have 25 million tourists who are expected to bring RM60bil in revenue,” she said.

Dr Ng said Malaysia received many “high-end” tourists from Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Iran, Taiwan, China and France last year who stayed for a long period and spent more during their visits.

This year, she said, the country expected more such visitors from Russia, central Asia, China and the Middle East.

Recently, AirAsia X announced the suspension of four loss-making international routes, namely to Mumbai, New Delhi, Paris and London.

MAS also suspended four routes on its regional network – Kota Kinabalu-Osaka, Kota Kinabalu-Perth, Kota Kinabalu-Haneda (Tokyo) and Kota Kinabalu-Seoul last month.

It also dropped eight routes from Kuala Lumpur to Surabaya, Johannesburg and Rome, Kuala Lumpur-Karachi-Dubai, Kuala Lumpur-Dubai-Damman, Kuala Lumpur-Cape Town-Buenos Aires, and Langkawi-Penang-Singapore.



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