

# Public-private network needed to enhance tourism safety – UMS prof

**KOTA KINABALU:** It is high time for the tourism industry in Malaysia to establish a safety and security system that involves intensive public-private network amongst tourism stakeholders.

Dr Jennifer Kim Lian Chan, associate professor in Tourism and Hospitality Management in the Faculty of Business and Economy in Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), said the system she proposed was a systematic approach of tourism safety that creates tools for crisis communication, safety management, risk management, foresight and quality.

Dr Kim said this in response to the latest abduction of a fish farm manager at Wonderful Terrace Company by five armed men at Pulau Baik, Lahad Datu around



Dr Kim

2.45am on Tuesday.

Yang Zai Lin, 34, from Guizhou province in China, was believed to have been abducted by a kidnap-for-ransom (KFR) armed group

from the Philippines.

This is the second kidnapping within a month this year. On April 2, a Chinese tourist and a Filipino worker identified as Gao Hua Yuan, 29, and Marcy Dayawan @ Mimi, 40, were abducted from Singamata Adventures Reef and Resort in Semporna by masked gunmen, believed to be part of the KFR group from the southern Philippines.

Dr Kim said Malaysia has been imaged and promoted as a safe, peaceful and hospitable tourist destination.

She said Malaysia was expecting to attract millions of tourist arrivals in conjunction with Visit Malaysia Year 2014.

However, the recent incidents in Malaysia - two abduction cases on islands in Sabah involving foreign tourists and the missing Malaysia

Airlines flight MH370 have raised the question of safety and security in travelling, she said.

"No doubt these incidents have negative impacts on the affected destination and our tourism industry as well as the tourist arrivals," said Dr Kim.

Rather than focusing on the negative impacts or how severe such incidents would affect tourist arrivals, she said that we should re-examine our security and safety system and actions promptly in dealing with such crises.

"In the tourism industry, the issue of safety and security is highly sensitive and fragile, as tourists will never go to places where it is not safe.

"It is the responsibility of the tourism suppliers to ensure the place is safe and secure to receive

their guests," she explained.

Dr Kim pointed out that it was practically impossible to completely eradicate safety and security incidents at tourist destinations, but concerted efforts from various stakeholders could reduce such incidents.

She said tourism safety must be ensured at multiple levels. At the national level, the police must enforce the law and ensure public safety.

"Generally, security and safety of the place rests on the government – the responsibility of the national security and police department who ensure security of the nation and law and enforcement. They are accountable for ensuring a high level of security for visiting tourists.

"At the grassroots level, the

mangers of hotels and other premises must be well aware of the importance of having proper equipment for guaranteeing their guests the security, proper procedures to react or prevent some accidents or crises, well-trained personnel, having the skills and knowledge to react in a crisis situation," said Dr Kim.

She added that the private sector or tourism suppliers such as accommodation and transportation providers bore the responsibility of their clients' safety by adhering to the rules and regulation, and to follow safety practices.

Dr Kim added that there was a need for more discussions and forums on preventive measures and crisis management options in terms of safety and security at tourist destinations.