

Ministry to come up with revised rules for tour guides

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KOTA KINABALU: Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen assured, Sunday, that the regulations for tourist guides nationwide will be reviewed to suit the unique situation facing tourist guides in Sabah.

She said tourism in Sabah deals largely with eco-tourism with only 20 per cent city guiding.

She was responding to Sabah tourist guides protest with her Ministry's new zoning policy and separation of the Green Badge for those guiding nature tours.

"We now understand (better) about the uniqueness of Sabah because Sabah is more eco-tourism than city tourism. So, we will review the needs and requests of the Sabah's tourist guides by combining city guides and nature guides.

"I think it makes a lot of sense and I think it is something that we can definitely do and will do," she said, during a courtesy call at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) here.

She would discuss the matter with State Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Masidi Manjun as well as with the Sabah Tourism Board (STB).

This is to ensure a new direction for tourist guides in Sabah, adding that the Ministry would look at the training path. Also, it is necessary because training for guiding in Sabah is quite different. "It will be a new direction. Life is always dynamic. Changes come, so, we have to follow the change."

Ng said the discussions with Masidi would be held soon after the Ramadan month before the outcome is put into place before October.

However, the decision would not compromise the specialist guiding (mountain guides) in Mount Kinabalu because the specialist guides there are quite different.

Further on the issue, she said city guides take tourists on city tours and relate to them the products infused with historical backgrounds such as during pre-independence, independence and post-independence, including the people.

Nature guides, on the other hand, were initially developed for Taman Negara. These guides are different because they must know a lot about what nature has to offer such as trees and other flora.

In Peninsular Malaysia, she said 80 per cent of tourist guides comprised city guides whereas the remaining, do eco-tourism guiding.

But in Sabah, she said, it is the reverse where 80 per cent carry out eco-tourism guiding and 20 per cent do city guiding. Ng commended Sabah tourism, saying in just five years it has progressed very fast.

Sabah Tourist Guides Association (STGA) last month said the badge and zoning policies were formulated in the peninsula without prior consideration for the unique situation in Sabah, which has become world famous for eco-tourism.

Its disciplinary officer, Lillian Agama said under the new ruling, only blue badge guides could pick up guests from the airport and send them to the hotel but could not take the guests out of the city.

To bring the guests out from the city such as to Kinabalu Park, only green badge holders are allowed due to the zoning restrictions.

"Such ruling requires a change of guides probably three or four times and this is not good for our source of income and also affects guide-guest relationship as well as the State's tourism," she said.

On other developments, Ng hoped to look into specialist guides in parks and gardens. "Maybe UMS can help in this matter where students go into practical guiding and do specialist guiding," she said.

All this is part of the Government moving forward efforts for its tourism industry via its Malaysia tourism transformation programme (MTTP).



Ng showing the media the "Park and Garden Trails of Malaysia" booklet in UMS yesterday.