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Tajuk : Taib: Peace And Security Vital For Tourism Industry's Growth.

# Talib: Peace and security vital for tourism industry's growth

**SANTUBONG:** A "sensitive" industry like tourism needs peace and security in order to thrive or else people would just go elsewhere, stresses Assistant Tourism Minister Datuk Talib Zulpilip.

He said even though the 13th general election was over, there were still some people who were dissatisfied with the results and threatened to stage demonstrations and all.

He said they failed to see the consequences of their acts, and one industry that was sure to be hit by instability was the tourism industry.

"Stop stirring people's sentiments. The majority of Malaysians have chosen the government so everyone must accept the verdict and respect their decision.

"We need peace to develop. An restive country would drive tourists away," he said when launching Damai Ethnic Food Festival at Damai Beach Resort here yesterday.

He asked the people to reconsider before joining in any street demonstration and risked sacrificing the peace that the country had been enjoying.

"This (demonstration) is due to some childish individuals. They are like children who did not get their toys and in the end they get angry and strike out at others. We don't want this sort of people to be our leaders," he said.

He assured that the Government was making all efforts to increase air connectivity to Sarawak and the momentum must be kept in order for



**Blue skies:** The crowd at the Damai Ethnic Food Festival.

the state's tourism to get better.

He said with improvement of connectivity in the works, other players in the industry must run their activities to generate interest.

"I suggest we have another food festival

before the year ends. This time we get the airlines involved to attract travellers," he said.

He reminded the food industry was a huge one and once tourists develop a taste for the cuisines of Sarawak, it be easier for local entrepreneurs to expand their business overseas.

He was glad that the Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC), which he heads as chairman, was venturing into culinary tourism or food tourism as the sector was now considered a vital component of tourism.

"According to the Travel Industry Association of America, 60% of American Leisure travellers indicate that they are interested in making trips to engage in culinary activities within the next 12 months. Travel enthusiasts are willing to pay big for cooking classes as well as authentic cultural exchanges," he said.

Therefore, he said, the cuisine of a destination was an aspect of the utmost importance in the quality of the holiday experience. A total of 44 stalls were set up around the resort offering all sorts of cuisines from Sarawakian dishes to Indonesian influence dishes.

There were also other booths selling hand-crafts, accessories, health drinks and garments.

The event also had activities like "bemukun" by Kumpulan Indera Samudera Kenyalang, silat tari performance by Kolej Bunga Raya Silat Tari Competition, food carving, cooking demonstration, beach telematch, fishing competition and many more.



**Hot and sour:** A Sarawakian favourite, the 'Assam Pedas'.



**A local delight:** Glutinous rice and other condiments steamed in pitcher plants.



**Comfort food:** Talib and Sarawak Cultural Village general manager Jane Lian Labang at SCV's food stall.