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## Hotels want dialogue on tourism tax

**PETALING JAYA:** The Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) is seeking to meet with the Tourism and Culture Ministry to amend some of the clauses under the Tourism Tax Bill 2017 that was tabled in Parliament on Tuesday.

Its president, Cheah Swee Hee, said among other things, the association does not want the tax to be charged on a per night basis, and that the operators of the premises are not made responsible for the tax collection.

"We have recently sent a memorandum to the ministry last week, seeking a proper engagement. There has yet to be a response, but we won't push the government. We just want to resolve this issue.

"We have been briefed last year, but no proper engagement was made. At that time, it wasn't even called the tourism tax, but tourism services fee," he told *theSun* yesterday.

The bill, which was tabled by Tourism and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Nazri

Abdul Aziz, states that the tourism tax shall be charged and levied on a tourist staying at any accommodation made available by an operator at the rate fixed by the minister.

Cheah said taxing tourists based on the nights of their stay would only deter them from having long vacations in the country.

"Hotels feel it is too heavy to impose on a per night basis. Maybe a one time charge per stay, regardless of how many nights, would suffice. We are trying to push for tourists to stay longer in our hotels to help boost our economy, and this would only keep them away," he said.

Cheah said while MAH does not object to the bill, it should also not be the duty of the hotels to collect the taxes.

At present, only Langkawi, Malacca and Penang charge tourists a tourism promotion fee, heritage tax fee and local government fee respectively, ranging from RM1 to RM9 per room per night, depending on the hotel's star rating. – by **Amar Shah Mohsen**

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