

Wee: Airfares Showing Downward Trend

KUALA LUMPUR : For the period between June 2 and July 8 this year, the airfares from Peninsular Malaysia to Sabah and Sarawak had shown a downtrend compared to May, says Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong. This was based on a monitoring done by the Malaysian Aviation Commission (Mavcom), he added.

“As for July, Mavcom found that the airfares continued to show stability and was almost similar to the average pricing offered in 2019. “For example, the ticket price for Kuala Lumpur- Kuching, one way, is between RM200 and RM400, compared to the price offered in June which was more than RM1,000, ” he said in reply to Lukanisman Awang Sauni (GPS-Sibuti) during the Question and Answer time in Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He had asked about the action taken by the ministry regarding the expensive airfares between Sabah and Sarawak to the Peninsula; and if a timeframe has been set to return the airfares to its price prior to Covid-19. Dr Wee advised people to make early plans and bookings and avoid last minute ticket buying to enjoy cheaper airfares.

He said in a meeting held with Malaysia Airlines Bhd, AirAsia Bhd and Malindo Air in June, the companies were asked to reduce their airfares in line with the government’s decision to exempt social distancing measures in the aircrafts. “However, the airline companies said that although the social distancing measure has been exempted, airfares do not necessarily decrease immediately. “The airlines need to ensure there is continuous and stable demand before airfares can return to a normalcy prior Covid-19, ” he said.

On airfares, Dr Wee said they are expected to return to normal prices in November this year once airlines resume their operations to their full capacity. Based on an analysis by Mavcom, the airfares were expected to return to its average pricing similar to 2019 by November this year. However, he cautioned that this would also be entirely dependent on the situation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Airline companies would need about 18 months to recover for the domestic sector while international sectors would need three years to completely recover from the impact of Covid-19.

Meanwhile, to a supplementary question, Dr Wee said that from January to June this year, a total of 169,728 international and local flights were cancelled by local airlines. From that, 114,693 were domestic while 55,035 were international flights, said Dr Wee. Due to the cancellation, Dr Wee said about 4.32 million passengers were affected during the period.

As for refunds, he said there were three categories – postponing the flights to a different date, maintaining flight credits and thirdly, a complete refund. Dr Wee said about 1.2 million people chose to postpone their travel dates, while 1.96 million passengers decided to retain the flight credit while 628,070 people got their refunds.