

Monday, May 3, 2004

GULF TIMES

7

Spain has recovered: study

'Impact of Madrid bombing on tourism was short'

Staff Reporter

THE Spanish tourism industry has "successfully recovered" from the impact of the March 11 bombings at Madrid, a business evaluation by Exceltur, a lobby of 29 top Spanish tourist groups and companies, indicates.

Exceltur chief executive officer, Jose Luis Zoreda said the general opinion of the Spanish tour operators was that there was only a short-term impact on Spanish tourism industry on account of the Madrid bombings.

He was speaking on the impact of Madrid bombings on Spanish tourism industry at the 4th Global Travel and Tourism Summit at the Sheraton yesterday.

A survey of some 1,200 tourist businesses by Exceltur between March 15 and April 8 indicated that only 34.4% reported any effect on their sales during the days following the terrorist attack. The remaining 65.6% did not notice any effects and carried on their activities as normal.

He said normality was restored within a few weeks of the terrorist attacks thanks to "the extraordinary response shown by national demand, together with the enormous support and confidence in safety measures and the great tourist attraction of Spain for foreign tourists".

Quoting a data from Spanish National Institute of Statistics, Zoreda said that in March Spanish tourists visiting hotel



Zoreda (second left) and Nieto with WTTC president Baumgarten (right) at the 4th Global Travel and Tourism Summit at the Sheraton yesterday.

establishments increased by 9.5%, with a rise in overnight stays of 8.6% throughout Spain, while in Madrid the response to the internal demand permitted a rise of 8% and 5.6% respectively of these official indicators.

Antonio Nieto, director-gen-

eral for Tourism (Madrid) in his speech thanked WTTC for the opportunity to express the gratitude of the people of Madrid to the world's tourism industry for all the messages of solidarity received after the events of March 11th.

He said: "The terrorist attacks

have had a slight impact on our tourism industry, but Madrid is already rebounding after only a few weeks. Data provided by the Spanish National Institute of Statistics shows that the number of international tourists that visited Madrid in the month of March 2004, grew more than

7.4%. This information clearly demonstrates that Madrid, as a tourist destination did not collapse and sends an optimistic message that the impact has been much lower than was expected in the first few days - although we need to be cautious about the next months."

"A new promotional campaign on behalf of the Madrid region is to be launched this month in our main European markets. In Spain, it's business as usual; people should continue to travel to Madrid or to anywhere else for that matter," Nieto said.