Taxi industry aims to up service standards

By Maria Almendoar

TAXI drivers, who are in the front line of the tourism sector, will soon know how they stack up against other service industries.

The taxi industry was one area surveyed as part of the National Customer Satisfaction Index which is put together by the Institute of Service Excellence at the Singapore Management University.

The results are likely to be out in the first quarter of this year. From there, taxi companies and the Taxi Operators' Association can see where they stand and improve in sections where they fall short.

National Trades Union Congress secretary-general Lim Swee Say said that while the taxi industry had done “very well” when it had been put to the test at major events, such as the International Olympic Committee meeting in 2006 and the ongoing Singapore Airshow, that was not enough.

“We must never neglect that improving quality service is a daily event, it’s a daily challenge,” he said.

He was speaking at the launch of the Taxi Customer-Centric Initiatives last evening. Part of these initiatives is to set up a task force to coordinate the efforts of the taxi companies to help improve service.

This includes mystery commuter audits of all six companies and then consolidating the results of the audit.

And to help cabbies improve their service standards, the Singapore Taxi Academy is offering a 16-hour training session for 5,000 cabbies this year.

The course teaches drivers the finer aspects of service, which includes checking if a passenger needs help with his bags, offering a tissue if a passenger is sneezing and turning down the volume of the radio if the passenger looks tired.

About $1.7 million has been raised to fund one year of training.

The aim is to train another 5,000 cabbies next year and eventually all active cabbies.