

PRESS RELEASE

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## MINISTER OF TOURISM LEADS DELEGATION TO THE MIDDLE EAST TO PROMOTE VMY 2014



**ONE FOR THE ALBUM:** Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri (middle) hits the gong to mark the opening of Malaysia Pavilion at the Arabian Travel Market on 5 May, 2014 as Melaka Chief Minister Datuk Seri Idris Haron (third from left) and wife Datin Seri Fadilah Abdullah (second from left) as well as Penang State Religious Affairs Committee Chairman Dato' Abdul Malik Abul Kasim (second from right), and Tourism Malaysia's Director General Dato' Mirza Mohammad Taiyab (far left) witness the ceremony.

**DUBAI, 5 May 2014** – Tourism Malaysia's efforts to publicise the country's fourth Visit Malaysia Year (VMY) 2014 and its comprehensive promotional activities continue in the Middle East.

The Minister of Tourism and Culture Malaysia Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz is leading a Malaysian delegation to participate in the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) in Dubai from 5 to 8 May, followed by a post-ATM sales mission to Qatar and Jordan.

The four-day ATM, the biggest travel and tourism fair in the Middle East, started today at Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre (DICEC). It offers Malaysia an excellent platform to market and boost awareness of VMY 2014 to the travel and tourism industry players in the Middle East.



ATM 2014 marks the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Malaysia's participation in this prestigious event, which is a strong testimony to the country's continued interest in the West Asian market and its commitment to attract more tourists from this market.

A total of 150 sellers from 84 organisations in Malaysia are participating in this year's ATM, comprising a good mix of hotels and resorts, travel agents, tourism products owners, and representatives from the state governments.

The Malaysia Pavilion, located at Hall 1, Sheikh Saeed Arena (Stand No. AS6420 - AS6620), officially opened today by Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri. He is also scheduled to meet the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority, the Chairman of Sharjah Commerce & Tourism Department (STCM), as well as the Chairmen/CEOs of top airlines in the Middle East. Besides that, meetings with top travel agencies in the Middle East and media interviews will also be held.

During ATM 2014, the Penang State Government will be launching a tourist guidebook for Muslim travellers titled "Experience Penang –A Muslim Travel Guide 2014". It serves as a comprehensive guide on tourist attractions in Penang, as well as restaurants that serve halal food, and accommodation with halal-certified kitchens, among others.

On 6 May, Tourism Malaysia will be hosting a dinner at Grand Hyatt Dubai. The 'Visit Malaysia Year 2014 Evening' will give the guests a glimpse of what awaits them in Malaysia, especially during the celebration of VMY 2014. It is also to show Tourism Malaysia's appreciation to buyers, media and invited guests for their support in promoting travel to Malaysia.

After ATM, Tourism Malaysia's promotional efforts in the Middle East will continue with a sales mission to Qatar (10 – 12 May) and Jordan (12 – 15 May). Programmes for both destinations include courtesy calls on Minister of Tourism Qatar, HE Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Jordan, and CEO of Qatar Airways, as well as travel marts, press conferences, gala dinners, and meetings with Malaysian Embassy's officials.

In 2013, a total of 324,437 West Asian tourists visited Malaysia. The country recorded 19,830 tourist arrivals from UAE and 7,264 tourists from Qatar, as well as 6,278 tourists from Jordan.

Last year, Tourism Malaysia added another feather in its cap by garnering the "Best Global Tourism Advertising Campaign" award at the 4<sup>th</sup> Middle East Business Leaders Awards 2013 in Abu Dhabi. The event was jointly organised by the Federation of GCC Chambers and The Leaders International.

At the recent ITB Berlin, the world's leading travel trade show, Tourism Malaysia's video bagged the gold award at the 2014 Golden City Gate Tourism Media Awards. Its winning entry, 'Malaysia Truly Asia – The Essence of Asia', edged out other international entries in the *Country* category. In



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addition, the Malaysia Pavilion also won the Best Booth. The Minister of Tourism and Culture Malaysia himself contributed idea to its design.

Malaysia also emerged as the world's top Muslim-friendly holiday destination in a survey released in early 2013. The study by Singapore-based Muslim travel consultancy Crescentrating ranked countries on how well they cater to the growing number of Muslim holidaymakers seeking Halal, or Islam-compliant, food and services.

Other major accolades that Malaysia received include being listed as one of the top 10 destinations to visit in Lonely Planet Best in Travel 2014. Besides that, Kuala Lumpur was ranked by CNN as the fourth Best Shopping City in the World in 2013 for two consecutive years. Malaysia was also listed as the third top retirement haven in the world for 2013, based on internationalliving.com's annual global retirement index.

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**MALAYSIA TOURISM PROMOTION BOARD OR TOURISM MALAYSIA** is an agency under the Ministry of Tourism & Culture, Malaysia. Tourism Malaysia focuses on the specific task of promoting Malaysia at all levels. Since its inception, Tourism Malaysia has grown by leaps and bounds and it has emerged as a major player in the international tourism scene. In 2013, Malaysia registered 25.7 million tourist arrivals and RM65.4 billion in receipts, making tourism its second largest foreign exchange earner and the sixth highest contributor to its Gross National Income (GNI).

Malaysia is celebrating its fourth **VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR (VMY)** in 2014 with the theme "Celebrating 1Malaysia Truly Asia". The VMY 2014 promotional campaign has started in 2013 with a series of year-long special events and activities leading to VMY 2014. It will contribute to the Government's target to receive 36 million tourist arrivals and RM168 billion in receipts by 2020, as outlined in the Malaysia Tourism Transformation Plan (MTTP) 2020.

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