



PRESS RELEASE

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**PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA OFFICIALLY OPENS  
THE 33<sup>RD</sup> ASEAN TOURISM FORUM (ATF) 2014:  
ASEAN – ADVANCING TOURISM TOGETHER**

**KUCHING, 20 JAN 2014:** The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak officially declared open the 33<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF 2014), *ASEAN – Advancing Tourism Together*, at the Sarawak State Legislative Assembly Building, here today.

The colourful opening ceremony and welcome dinner bearing the Visit Malaysia Year (VMY) 2014 theme of *Celebrating 1Malaysia, Truly Asia* was also graced by the Chief Minister of Sarawak, Pehin Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud, ASEAN Tourism Ministers, the Minister of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, as well as some 2,000 guests including 879 sellers from ASEAN countries, 462 international buyers and a host of foreign and local travel trade media.

“Malaysia is honoured to host the ATF 2014 for the sixth time. I hope that this forum will chart the strategic directions to expedite the growth and development of tourism in ASEAN and enhance our collaboration to project ASEAN as an attractive and multi-faceted single destination,” said Dato' Sri Mohd Najib.

“The theme, *ASEAN – Advancing Tourism Together*, chosen for the ATF 2014 is certainly appropriate and timely. It reinforces the commitment of ASEAN Member States to work hand in hand to achieve the vision and goals of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2011 – 2015,” added Dato' Seri Mohd Najib.

Highlights of the opening ceremony included the joint launching of *The Magical Gardens of ASEAN* coffee table book by Dato' Sri Mohd Najib and ASEAN Tourism Ministers, along with the Chief Minister of Sarawak, the Minister of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, and Sarawak's Minister of Tourism and Housing Development.

*The Magical Gardens of ASEAN* is produced by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, with contributions from the respective ASEAN Member States to promote ASEAN Parks and Gardens. The effort goes in line with ASEAN's objective to promote sustainable economic development through the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage in the region.



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Malaysia also took the opportunity to showcase its cultural diversity, where guests were treated to an hour-long “Malaysia Truly Asia” cultural performance while enjoying “1Malaysia Truly Asia Fusion Food”.

The opening ceremony featured traditional dances and music of Malaysia’s multi-racial community, besides performances by renowned international violinist, Dennis Lau and local songstress, Dayang Nurfaizah, who hails from Sarawak. Guests were also feted to a musical performance of ASEAN songs.

The 8-day ATF 2014, which will end on 23 January, will deliberate and explore the sustainable development of tourism and look at how various tourism initiatives and plans can further support the mantra of *Tourism Conserves, Preserves and Protects*.

Apart from ASEAN Tourism Ministers and senior government officials, other participants at the ATF 2014 included ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (NTOs), exhibitors, buyers and sellers, as well as Travel Exchange (TRAVEX) delegates from all over the world.

The ATF 2014 provides an excellent platform for Malaysia to showcase its diverse range of tourism attractions, particularly in Sarawak and Sabah, as well as the year-long celebrations of Visit Malaysia Year (VMY) 2014.

### **BACKGROUNDER:**

Each year, the hosting of ATF is rotated among the member countries. ATF 2014 marks the 33rd anniversary of this event since its inauguration in Malaysia in 1981.

Among the core objectives of ATF include:

- Projecting ASEAN as an attractive, multi-faceted single destination;
- Creating and increasing awareness of ASEAN as a highly competitive regional tourist destination in the Asia Pacific;
- Attracting more tourists to ASEAN member countries;
- Promoting intra-ASEAN travel; and
- Strengthening cooperation among the various sectors of the ASEAN tourism industry.

First established in 1981, the ATF has been a key driving force in developing tourism in the ASEAN region. For over three decades, government and private sector associations have come together annually at ATF to discuss, review and strategise ways to continuously promote ASEAN as the world’s top travel destination.



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The very first ATF was hosted in Genting Highlands, Malaysia. It was seen as an early indication of the willingness of ASEAN countries to work together for the common good of every member country. Since then, ASEAN has grown economically by leaps and bounds, and garnered international recognition for its diverse culture, and the quality of ASEAN as an unforgettable holiday destination. Among the major initiatives of ATF was the promotion of Visit ASEAN Year 1992 and Visit ASEAN Campaign 2002.

With all 10 ASEAN member nations working hand in hand with the public and private sectors, significant progress has been made in growing a sustainable tourism industry in the region. Through increased cooperation and exploring mutually beneficial collaboration in facing common regional challenges, every ASEAN nation stands to benefit from sharing its unique, diverse cultures with the rest of the world through tourism.

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For more media releases, media info and media features on Malaysia's tourism industry, kindly visit the Media Centre of Tourism Malaysia's website at <http://www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my/>

**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 2012, Malaysia registered 25 million tourist arrivals and RM60.6 billion in tourist receipts, placing the country firmly as the 10<sup>th</sup> most popular tourism destination in the world.

In 2014, Malaysia will celebrate its fourth **VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR (VMY)** with the theme "Celebrating 1Malaysia Truly Asia". The VMY 2014 promotional campaign has started this year 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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