

MEDIA RELEASE

TOURISM MINISTER ENCOURAGES THE STANDARDISATION OF SPA RATING AMONG ASEAN COUNTRIES



Tourism Minister, the Hon. Dato' Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen (centre) with her ASEAN counterparts during the Fourth Meeting of ASEAN and India Tourism Ministers at ATF 2013

VIENTIANE, 21 Jan. 2013: Tourism Minister the Hon. Dato' Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen arrived at the 2013 ASEAN Tourism Forum in Laos today and co-chaired the Fourth Meeting of ASEAN and India Tourism Ministers (4th M-ATM+India), along with the Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Lao PDR, H.E. Prof. Dr. Bosengkham Vongdara; and the Minister for Tourism, Government of India, H.E. Dr. K.Chiranjeevi.

During the meeting, Dato' Sri Dr. Ng highlighted Malaysia's achievement in developing the country's spa industry. The Tourism Minister strongly encouraged her ASEAN counterparts to standardise the rating of the spa industry in the region.

The Ministry of Tourism, Malaysia, has been giving special attention to this industry for the past few years. In order to upgrade the image of the industry, the Tourism Ministry has undertaken the rating of spas. It has streamlined the growing spa industry in the country, which includes having a self-regulatory rating system for spa operators and the Ministry's recommendation to the Immigration Department for approval to employ foreign spa therapists.

To increase the number of Malaysians working in the industry, the Tourism Ministry has come up with the Centre of Excellence (COE) initiative, which conducts spa therapy training programmes. The Government aims to have 6,000 certified Malaysian spa therapists by 2020. With more concentrated efforts in capacity building and rating of the spa industry, it is set to contribute RM0.4bil to the GNI of the country.

During the meeting, the Ministers welcomed the adoption of the Vision Statement of the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit held on 20 Dec 2012 in New Delhi, India, particularly on enhancing the ASEAN Connectivity through supporting the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity.

The Ministers also supported the close collaboration of ASEAN and India to enhance air, sea and land connectivity within ASEAN and between ASEAN and India through ASEAN-India connectivity project.

The Ministers agreed to sign the Protocol to amend the Memorandum of Understanding between ASEAN and India on Strengthening Tourism Cooperation, which would further strengthen the tourism collaboration between ASEAN and India national tourism organisations at the earliest possible opportunity.

In order to further promote tourism exchange between ASEAN and India, the Ministers launched the ASEAN-India tourism website as a platform to jointly promote tourism destinations, sharing basic information about ASEAN Member States and India, and a visitor guide.

The 33rd ASEAN Tourism Forum will be held next year from 16 to 23 January in Kuching, Sarawak, which will coincide with the celebration of Visit Malaysia Year 2014.

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