



## MEDIA RELEASE

### VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR 2014 SETS TO START ON A HIGH NOTE WITH THE 33<sup>RD</sup> ASEAN TOURISM FORUM

**KUALA LUMPUR, 26 Jan 2013:** Visit Malaysia Year 2014 is set to start on a high note with the hosting of the 33<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) in Kuching, Sarawak, from 16 to 23 January.

Tourism Minister YB Dato' Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen accepted the ATF 2014 flag from the Vice Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism of Lao PDR, H.E. Mr. Chaleune Warinthrasak at the Handing Over Ceremony on 24 Jan; formally passing the baton to Malaysia as host of the prestigious event.

"The 33<sup>rd</sup> ATF will be the premier international event to usher in Visit Malaysia Year 2014, which will display the best of Malaysia as we celebrate 1Malaysia Truly Asia.

"A wide range of activities and events has been lined-up for the whole year to cater to the interest of different types of travellers," said Dato' Sri Dr. Ng.

For Malaysia, ATF has always evoked a sense of nostalgia as the very first forum was held in the country at Genting Highlands in 1981. It last hosted the event in 2005 in Langkawi. ATF 2014 will be the sixth time the country is playing host to the forum.

The Tourism Minister said that Malaysia is honoured to continue the spirit and tradition of the ASEAN Tourism Forum, which embraces the role of being a catalyst for change in tourism policy and development, subsequently improving the economic and social standing among ASEAN countries.

"For the 2014 ATF, Malaysia has chosen the theme "ASEAN - Advancing Tourism Together". We believe it is time for us to raise the tourism industry value-chain to a higher level. This can only be achieved by working together for mutual benefit.

"In this regard, we need your full support and active participation in both the forum and TRAVEX," said Dato' Sri Dr. Ng at the Handing Over Ceremony at Lao ITECC, which also marked the end of ATF 2013 in Vientiane, Laos.

The ceremony was also attended by H.E. Mr. Sommath Pholsena, the Minister of Public Work, Lao PDR; H.E. Mr. Sava Khone Rajsamontry and H.E. Mr. Bouangeun Saphouvong, the Vice Ministers of Information, Culture and Tourism, Lao PDR; H.E. Mr. Saythong Keodouangdy, the Vice Mayor of Vientiane Capital; and H.E. Dato' Than Tai Hing, Malaysian Ambassador to the Lao PDR; as well as members of the Laos and international travel trade fraternity, the Malaysian delegation, and members of the international media.

"With this official handing over of the ATF to Malaysia, we just can't wait to welcome all of you to Kuching, Sarawak, on the island of Borneo, which is the venue of the upcoming

ATF 2014,” added the Tourism Minister, who are confident that delegates will be fascinated by Sarawak’s natural wonders such as the Mulu National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

As in previous years, the 2014 ATF was participated by a strong Malaysian delegation comprising 52 hoteliers, travel agents, theme park operators and state tourism boards (Sarawak Tourism Board, Sabah Tourism Board and Tourism Selangor), who went all out to woo over 400 international buyers.

During the three-day TRAVEX (Travel Exchange) at the Lao ITECC, Tourism Malaysia made 155 appointments with international buyers, who were at its booth to engage with representatives of Malaysian businesses and tourism organisations.

Besides TRAVEX, the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2013 also offered Malaysian delegation various effective avenues to promote the country’s new tourism products, services and events to international delegates and media.

Dato’ Sri Dr. Ng, who arrived in Vientiane on 21 January, co-chaired the Fourth Meeting of ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers, along with the Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism of Lao PDR, H.E. Prof. Dr. Bosengkham Vongdara; and the Minister for Tourism, Government of India, H.E. Dr. K.Chiranjeevi.

The Tourism Minister also paid courtesy calls on the Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism of Lao PDR, H.E. Prof. Dr. Bosengkham Vongdara; the Senior Vice Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan, H.E. Mr. Yosuke Tsuruho; and the President & CEO of World Travel & Tourism Council, Mr. David Scowsill.

Tourism Malaysia continued its promotional efforts in Vientiane by hosting a dinner for hosted buyers and media on 22 January at Don Chan Palace Hotel. It received overwhelming response with about 1,000 delegates, anticipating the presentation by Dato’ Sri Dr. Ng. Among others, she highlighted the performance of Malaysia’s tourism industry, its latest developments, significant events in 2013, and most importantly, the celebration of Visit Malaysia Year 2014.

In brief, Malaysia’s participation in the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2013 in Vientiane, Laos, has been fruitful.

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