



PRESS RELEASE

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ASEAN TOURISM FORUM 2014: HAILED A MAJOR SUCCESS

KUCHING, 23 Jan 2014: The Minister of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, declared the 33rd ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) a resounding success, as the 8-day event officially ended here today.

"This is our 33rd ATF. We have certainly come a long way. From humble beginnings 33 years ago, we are now on the threshold of realising our goal of *One Vision, One Identity, One Community* for ASEAN by 2015.

"We have made significant progress indeed. I am pleased to announce that we have completed 75% of the measures outlined under the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2011-2015. By 2015, we shall achieve 100%. Moving forward, let us work together to chart the strategic directions to maximise the potential of ASEAN tourism beyond 2015," said Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri.

"I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to the State Government of Sarawak for being our co-host in organising the ATF 2014. The unwavering support and cooperation given by the State Government has certainly made a significant difference to ATF 2014.

I wish to congratulate our strategic partner, ASEAN Tourism Association or ASEANTA for successfully co-organising TRAVEX and ASEAN Tourism Conference (ATC) 2014. TRAVEX 2014 sets a new record for Borneo Convention Center Kuching (BCCK) in terms of total floor space utilised for the travel fair. In fact, all the booths were taken up. As for the Conference, it was very well received and provided fresh insights on accessibility and development of cruise and river-based tourism," he continued.

Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri also handed over the Chairmanship of ATF 2015 to Myanmar's Minister of Hotels and Tourism, U Htay Aung; formally passing the baton to the Myanmar as the host of the next ASEAN Tourism Forum in Naypidaw.

The theme of ATF 2015 is *ASEAN - Tourism Towards Peace, Prosperity and Partnership*.

The closing ceremony at the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCCK) was also graced by the Minister of Tourism and Housing Development of Sarawak, Datuk Amar Abang Haji Abdul Rahman Zohari Tun Datuk Abang Haji Openg, ASEAN Tourism Ministers, and some 700 guests.

"The Sarawak State Government is very pleased with the feedback of the ATF 2014 as it has provided us with an excellent platform to showcase the state's tourism attractions and position Sarawak as the Tourism Gateway to Borneo," said Minister of Tourism and Housing Development of Sarawak, Datuk Amar Abang Haji Abdul Rahman.



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The ATF 2014 has further strengthened intra-regional cooperation and coordination in tourism through various meetings such as the 17th Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers, and the 13th Meeting of ASEAN Plus Three (China, Japan, & Republic of Korea) Tourism Ministers, besides other meetings of National Tourism Organisations (NTOs).

In line with its theme *ASEAN – Advancing Tourism Together*, ATF 2014 has raised the tourism industry value-chain to a higher level through strong cooperation among ASEAN member states. The Forum also continued ASEAN’s objective to explore the sustainable development of tourism and reviewed various tourism initiatives and plans, in line with the mantra of *Tourism Conserves, Preserves, and Protects*.

The presence of over 1,600 delegates, including 100 foreign and local travel trade media at the ATF 2014 offered Malaysia an excellent opportunity to showcase its diverse tourism products, particularly those in Sarawak and Sabah, and raise awareness of the celebration of Visit Malaysia Year 2014.

The Travel Exchange (TRAVEX) was another important component of the ATF. The 3-day business event attracted a total of 450 booths set up by 353 exhibitors comprising 879 sellers to market regional individual tourism products from ASEAN member countries to 462 international buyers who attended the event.

The Director General of Tourism Malaysia, Dato’ Mirza Mohammad Taiyab, also took the opportunity to promote Visit Malaysia Year 2014 during the ASEAN NTOs Media Briefing. Other ASEAN countries then took turns to share their respective tourism development and attractions.

During ATF 2014, various awards were also presented, namely, the 27th ASEANTA Awards for Excellence in Tourism and the ASEAN Green Hotel Award. The latter is held biennially during ATF and is presented to hotels for their efforts to be environmentally-friendly and adopt energy conservation measures.

A total of 86 hotels from 10 ASEAN countries received the honour this year, with ten being Malaysian hotels including the Mandarin Oriental, Riverside Majestic Hotel, and Shangri-La’s Rasa Ria Resort.

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 10th 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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