



MEDIA RELEASE

INTRA-REGIONAL TOURISM IS A LUCRATIVE BUSINESS FOR ALL ASEAN COUNTRIES

MANADO, Jan. 12:

The Minister of Tourism Malaysia, YB Dato' Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen, met with the Governor of North Sulawesi, Indonesia, Dr. S.H. Sarundajang, at the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2012 in Manado, Indonesia, to explore the possibility of forging even closer tourism cooperation between North Sulawesi and Malaysia, as well as accelerating development of the tourism industry within the ASEAN region.

Dato' Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen supported the '*ASEAN for ASEAN*' initiative and emphasised on the importance of ASEAN countries working together in jointly promoting each other as attractive tourist destinations.

"This is an important potential to tap as travellers to the ASEAN countries registered 70 million in 2011, of which 42 percent (29.4 million) are travellers from within ASEAN. In 2011, tourism receipts for the ASEAN countries stood at USD68 billion.

Even if 40 percent (USD27 billion) of the tourism receipts came from ASEAN travellers, intra-regional tourism will be a lucrative business for ASEAN countries," she continued

Visa was another issue that was touched upon. Besides being a requirement for international travel, it also concerns the issue of security. Hence, ASEAN countries should work out a convenient way of encouraging travellers within the region without affecting national security.

"I recommend that an ASEAN Card be created along the line of the APEC Card for the convenience of business travelers," she said.

The meeting also discussed on the promotion of ASEAN as a single brand. In promoting ASEAN as a tourist destination, Dato' Sri Dr. Ng said it is important that ASEAN countries highlight destinations that have strong global recognition in their respective countries, such as the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Malaysia (Melaka and George Town, Penang), Indonesia (Borobudur) and Cambodia (Angkor Wat).

“Several themes should also be considered such as 'adventure holidays', 'diving holidays', and 'heritage holidays'. ASEAN countries have almost everything to offer to tourists, regardless of their interests or budgets,” Dato Sri Dr. Ng continued.

The Tourism Minister also touched on cruise tourism, which has been promoted and developed extensively in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean but not in the ASEAN region yet.

“The idea to develop this product which is capable of contributing billions of dollars to the national economies of member countries has been agreed upon by the ASEAN tourism ministers.

Cruise tourism generates economic returns not only from tourists but also through the provision of related services such as food supply, fuel and water, at the ports of call,” she said.

In ASEAN, there's no network of connectivity for cruise tourism. The time has come for ASEAN countries to develop this segment of the tourism industry for the benefit of the region.

During the meeting of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers, a presentation was made by the famous Miami-based Royal Caribbean Cruise, which focused on the potential of cruise tourism in ASEAN.

“ASEAN countries should take the initiative to further improve connectivity by establishing cruise terminals. China is currently developing an action plan to develop its cruise tourism. ASEAN countries should recognise this significant development and collaborate to develop the cruise industry,” said Dato Sri Dr. Ng.

“I am confident that ASEAN countries can also capitalise on the lucrative opportunities from cruise tourism as offered by China by providing ports of call.

Malaysia is very keen to develop in the area of cruise tourism. A programme is currently being studied by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) as the idea has been listed as a key economic driver under the National Key Economic Area (NKEA),” added Dato Sri Dr. Ng.


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