



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **TOURISM MINISTER: BE CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE IN ATTRACTING TOURISTS**

Drive the tourism industry with creative and innovative products and promotions. This was the clarion call by the Hon. Minister of Tourism, Dato' Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen, to the Tourism Malaysia overseas directors who are in town for the annual Overseas Directors' Meeting from 12 to 18 July 2009, held at Seri Pacific Kuala Lumpur hotel and Putra World Trade Centre.

The meeting, coinciding with the Hon. Minister's 100<sup>th</sup> day in office, was organised to establish and implement new strategies, set the Key Performance Indicators for the Tourism Malaysia offices overseas and identify the "Big Wins," or expected medium term results from each station.

With worldwide tourist arrivals down by 8 percent in the first four months of this year, as reported by UNWTO, Malaysia is similarly affected. June arrivals showed declines in certain markets such as China, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. The global economic situation and impact of the Influenza A (H1N1) were the main contributing factors.

Among the Minister's key messages were for Tourism Malaysia officers to think beyond the ordinary in promoting and packaging Malaysia to their respective markets, re-consider advertising campaigns, as well as to create, and not just comply to, a need among tourists. The Minister cited the *Big Think Strategy*, developed by Bernd H. Schmitt, in encouraging officers to be bold and courageous in their promotion of Malaysia.

The Minister also recapped her 100 days accomplishments in the Ministry of Tourism:

- Immediate implementation of the “No Room Sharing” policy between male and female tour guides;
- Focus on Rural Tourism Economy by strengthening the homestay programme.
  - The homestay programme is undergoing a concept make-over from being listed as a form of accommodation to promoting it as a unique and authentic Malaysian experience encompassing experiences in village lifestyle, culture, agriculture, cuisine and more.
  - The Minister is encouraging the twinning of homestay programmes with suitable overseas markets in order to build bonds for repeat visits. The homestay twinning programme will see each homestay village paired up with a specific market, for example, Kelantan homestay will be twinned with Singapore due to the rail service accessibility that runs from the south to Kelantan. Another twinning programme will involve Melaka and Holland since both share historical Dutch ties.
  - The Ministry is also offering free reflexology training courses to homestay operators to equip them with the skill which they can offer as a service to homestay guests.
- Building capacity for tour guides by offering them foreign language courses.
- Focusing on MICE through the Malaysian Conventions and Exhibitions Bureau (MyCEB) by engaging a professional consultant to assist in marketing and promotions.
- Enhancing promotions of the Malaysia My Second Home programme by targeting retirees in markets such as Australia, China, Japan, and Europe. The Minister cited that retirees in Japan and some European countries receive monthly pensions that can be considered substantial

in Malaysia and offer them a more comfortable lifestyle in Malaysia due to the affordable costs of living here.

- Identifying specific market segments to pursue:
  - Golden 3<sup>rd</sup> Age (G3A) - senior citizens for whom the MM2H programme would be appealing
  - Sophisticated Office Ladies (SOL) - especially young female executives who love shopping and pampering, for example those from Indonesia and Japan
  - Building Bridges - focused on promoting Malaysia, especially homestay programmes, to the youth and student market
  - Family Enrichment Programme (FEP) - packages targeted at families who want to enjoy leisurely holidays and the opportunity to bond with each other
  - Dive for Certificate (DFC) - Since diving requires a certificate, Malaysia can promote this DFC product as a very affordable leisure-cum-educational programme. Generally, in Malaysia, a four-day open-water diving course certified by PADI or NAUI only costs about USD280 per person, and is usually conducted at any one of Malaysia's beautiful islands / beach resorts

This year's Overseas Directors' Meeting brings together some 43 overseas directors and marketing officers of Tourism Malaysia stationed worldwide. The week-long meeting includes presentations by the Health Ministry on the Influenza A(H1N1) situation, and product briefings on the homestay and Malaysia My Second Home programmes, as well as visits to selected tourist destinations in town.

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