



**SARAWAK ALL SET TO WELCOME
OVER 1,600 DELEGATES TO ASEAN TOURISM FORUM
16-23 JANUARY 2014**

KUCHING, 10 JANUARY 2014: With just days to the opening ceremony of the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF), the state of Sarawak and host city of Kuching, are all geared to welcome over 1,600 delegates which includes ASEAN Tourism Ministers and officials, exhibitors, international buyers, international and local media as well as tourism trade visitors.

Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak is scheduled to deliver a key note address at the official opening ceremony on January 20. The ATF is the first major international conference in conjunction with the start of Visit Malaysia Year (VMY) 2014.

The ATF is a cooperative regional effort to position and promote the ASEAN region as one tourist destination where Asian hospitality and cultural diversity are at its best.

Adopting the theme, ASEAN - ADVANCING TOURISM TOGETHER, the ATF 2014 will deliberate and explore the sustainable development of tourism and look at how various tourism initiatives and plans can further support the mantra of *Tourism Conserves, Preserves and Protects*.

"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, and subsequently improving the economic and social standing among ASEAN countries," said the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz.

"Malaysia is pleased to have the presence of ASEAN Ministers of Tourism from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, as well as Dialogue Partners from China, Japan, Korea, India, Russia and Brazil. The ASEAN Tourism Ministers will also be having consultations with international organisations namely United Nations World Tourism Organisation, World Travel & Tourism Council and PATA.

"The ministerial meetings are aimed at promoting an exchange of ideas, review of industry developments and joint formulation of recommendations to further accelerate the growth of ASEAN tourism," he continued.

As the annual convention of the ASEAN tourism industry, ATF comprises ASEAN Tourism Ministerial Meetings, the ASEAN Tourism Conference and a 3-day TRAVEX event.

The unique and specialised ATF TRAVEX makes it easy and convenient for suppliers of ASEAN tourism products and services and international buyers to conduct business and meet quality



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participants through the Seller-Meet-Buyer (SMB) and the Buyer-Meet-Seller (BMS) appointment scheduling sessions. Both parties can maximise their participation through flexible one-to-one pre-scheduled meetings to explore, negotiate and ink deals with each other. ATF TRAVEX 2014 will be held at The Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCCK).

The ASEAN Tourism Conference will see several prominent leaders in the industry taking the stage to share their experiences and know-how.

AirAsia CEO, Aireen Omar, will address on ASEAN open skies policy, while Princess Cruises Southeast Asia Director, Farriek Tawfik, will share insights on the cruise and sea transportation sector.

The Operations Director of Bangkok's Mass Transit System, Sumit Srisanthitum, will talk on latest trends on ground transportation, while UNWTO Regional Director, Xu Jing, will talk about river-based tourism.

To date, there are 879 sellers and 462 buyers already confirmed for the ATF TRAVEX. A total of 100 local and international media have also confirmed to cover the ATF.

This annual event involves all the tourism industry sectors of the 10-member nations of ASEAN namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. It is the sixth time that Malaysia hosts the ATF after Genting Highlands in 1981, Langkawi and Penang in 1992, Kuala Lumpur in 1997 and Langkawi again in 2005.

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



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annually at ATF to discuss, review and strategise ways to continuously promote ASEAN as the world's top travel destination.

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.

ENDS

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 celebrates its fourth **VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR (VMY)** with the theme "Celebrating 1Malaysia Truly Asia". The VMY 2014 sees a series of year-long special events and activities. 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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