



PRESS RELEASE

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MINISTER ATTENDS ASEAN TOURISM FORUM 2018 IN THAILAND 22nd – 26th January 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand

Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Ali bin Haji Apong, Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism, attended the Twenty-First ASEAN Tourism Ministers Meeting, Seventeenth ASEAN Plus Three Tourism Ministers Meeting and the Sixth ASEAN – India Tourism Ministers Meeting from 25th to 26th January 2018, in Chiang Mai Thailand in conjunction with the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2018 (ATF). The meetings were preceded by the Forty-Seventh Meeting of ASEAN National Tourism Organisations (NTOs), the Thirty-Second Meeting of ASEAN Plus Three (APT) NTOs, Sixth ASEAN- India Tourism Working Group Meeting and related meetings with dialogue partners from the 22nd – 24th January 2018. Also present was Yang Mulia Awang Wardi bin Haji Mohammad Ali, Deputy Permanent Secretary (Tourism) of Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism.

During the Forum, the Ministers noted the progress in the implementation of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2016-2025 where 15 key activities under the Work Plan for 2016-2017 have been completed. In ensuring continued implementation of the programme, the Ministers adopted the two-year Work Plan (2018-2019), translating identified activities within ATSP 2016-2025 into concrete detailed plans with clear milestones to be achieved for the next two years. The Ministers appreciated the active role of the lead countries in leading the implementation of ATSP activities and encouraged their continued support to sustain ASEAN tourism's contribution towards the realisation of ASEAN integration goals in 2025.

Expanding the ASEAN regional destination-marketing programme

Based on preliminary submissions made by Member States, for 2017, ASEAN is expected to receive 125 million international visitors, exceeding the target of 121 million international tourist arrivals to the region set for Visit ASEAN@50 Campaign which was led by Brunei Darussalam. This new record posts a growth of 4% per cent from 2016, where the arrivals were dominated by intra-ASEAN travel, accounting for 42% per cent of total international arrivals. In addition to visitor arrivals target, the targets of stay length and revenue have also been fully achieved, with ASEAN hosting a total of 7.98 days of stay of international tourists, and generated USD 93 billion from tourism in 2017.

The success of the Visit ASEAN@50 Campaign was attributed to various marketing and promotional activities undertaken in 2016 and 2017, the Ministers also acknowledged the significant support provided by ASEAN-China Centre (ACC), ASEAN-Japan Centre (AJC), ASEAN-Korea Centre (AKC), AirAsia, Mastercard, TTG, CNN and GoASEAN.

The Ministers supported the ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy (ATMS) 2017-2020, as an instrument to translate ATSP into a detailed plan of tourism marketing activities for ASEAN that provided a framework and strategic marketing direction for tourism collaboration in order to enhance the competitiveness and awareness of ASEAN as a single tourism destination.



Following the momentum built from the Visit ASEAN@50 Campaign, the Ministers agreed with recommendations of ATMS to strengthen effort in marketing ASEAN tourism through partnerships with international partners. In this regard, the Ministers invited international partners to establish collaboration with ASEAN to promote and market the region through mutual beneficial activities led by ASEAN Tourism Marketing Partnership Working Group.

Further Developing Cruise Tourism

The Ministers adopted the ASEAN Declaration on Cruise Tourism that highlighted the commitments of ASEAN to further develop and strengthen cruise tourism due to its potential for high economic growth. The Declaration outlines the States' commitment towards greater clarity in cruise-related policies and regulations, efficiency in processes, responsibility in business practices and capacity building. The Ministers reflected the implementation of the Cruise Tourism Declaration could include yachting and marina activities.

Developing ASEAN Tourism Products

The Ministers were pleased to note the progress of the development of new ASEAN Tourism Packages involving private sector, which would feature more than 130 tourism products covering multi-ASEAN destinations. In developing such products, the Ministers tasked senior officials to also include supporting the development of ASEAN sub-regional destinations/corridors targeting more inclusive tourism outcomes.

The Ministers acknowledged the integral role of gastronomy in building a competitive destination brand and its ability to be a key driver to achieve inclusiveness, and thus encouraged cooperation between ASEAN Member States to support the development of sustainable food production and consumption, and promote deeper understanding about gastronomic tourism in Southeast Asia. The Ministers adopted the Joint Declaration on Gastronomy and Tourism aiming at establishing region's gastronomy platform for knowledge sharing to substantially expand ASEAN gastronomic experiences.

Driving Investments in Infrastructure to Keep Pace with Tourism Growth

The Ministers acknowledged the urgency to expand and upgrade infrastructure and facilities to drive investment, and supported the Philippines to undertake collection of ASEAN conditions opportunities and concurrently Myanmar's effort in the implementation of related investment "guidelines" on rules and regulation to generate interest among international investors.

The Ministers applauded the effort for the collaboration with ASEAN-Korea Centre, ASEAN-Japan Centre and ASEAN-China Centre in organising the ASEAN Plus Three Tourism Investment Seminar in Korea, Japan and China from 2018 to 2020 and urged the AMS to actively participate in the seminar by sending speakers and participants to join the seminar.



Moving Forward toward “Accessible Tourism for All”

The Ministers encouraged Member States to further invest in related tourism infrastructure to further realise market potential by bringing better accessibility for all particularly to people with disabilities, senior citizens, women and children.

Tourism Standards

The ASEAN Tourism Standards Awards took place on 26 January 2018 in Chiang Mai. There were 47 awardees for the ASEAN Green Hotel Award, 47 awardees for the ASEAN MICE Venue Award, and 23 awardees for the ASEAN Clean Tourist City Award. The Ministers noted the progress of adding two new categories to the ASEAN MICE Venue Standard for the Meeting Room category, namely: (1) Meeting Room in Convention and Exhibition Center setting; and (2) Meeting Room in Public/Private Sector setting.

Brunei Darussalam received several awards during the event which was presented by Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Ali bin Haji Apong, Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism namely:

1. ASEAN Green Hotel Award received by Ulu-Ulu Resort and Radisson Hotel
2. ASEAN MICE Venue Award was awarded to Radisson Hotel, V-Plaza Hotel and The Empire Hotel and Country Club
3. ASEAN Clean Tourist City Award was awarded to Bandar Seri Begawan.

Enhancing Quality of Tourism Professionals

The Ministers noted the completion of all 242 toolboxes for all divisions under the Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Tourism Professionals (MRA TP), and completion of training for Master Trainers and Master Assessors for respective divisions. A study to develop a new five-year MRA Work Plan 2018-2022 is being carried out with the support of the ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Programme (AADCP) II to review implementation of the MRA TP, including identifying various factors and trends that may affect the response to this mechanism.

The Ministers were pleased with the progress of drafting a Host Country Agreement for the full establishment of the Regional Secretariat for the Implementation of the MRA-TP in Jakarta Indonesia, and tasked senior officials to start the Secretariat's operations in 2018. In line with ATSP 2016-2025, the Ministers adopted the expansion of MRA implementation to the MICE industry, based on the requirements and needs of the industry of ASEAN Member States. The Ministers thanked the Government of Australia for their continued support in the operationalization of the MRA-TP through the AADCP II.

Enhancing connectivity for tourism

The Ministers were pleased with the signing of the ASEAN Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Cross Border Transport of Passengers by Road Vehicles (CBTP) by ASEAN



Transport Ministers. This would facilitate seamless cross-border mobility of passengers and promote overland travel between ASEAN Member States, particularly those traveling by bus and coaches. In further facilitating land travel within ASEAN, the Ministers noted the development of studies on “Promoting Drive/Overland Tourism Across ASEAN through Recognition of Domestic Driving Licenses Issued by ASEAN Countries”, and “Promote Development of Road Connectivity along Major Tourism Corridors”.

The Ministers noted with interest the progress made on the ASEAN Common Visa initiative by the Ad Hoc Working Group on ASEAN Common Visa, and looked forward to the development of this initiative to further boost tourism into ASEAN.

ASEAN Plus Three

The Ministers were pleased to note the growth of the APT region’s tourism industry in 2017, with the APT region welcoming 175 million international visitors, a growth of 6.7 per cent compared to 2016.

The Ministers appreciated the progress made in the implementation the Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) on ASEAN Plus Three Tourism Cooperation and adopted the APT Tourism Cooperation Work Plan 2018-2020 as the successor of the APT Tourism Cooperation Work Plan 2013-2017. The 2018-2020 Work Plan will continue to provide direction to further enhance APT cooperation in facilitating travel and tourist visits, promoting the development of quality tourism, improving tourism knowledge and skill development, as well as sharing and exchanging information and best practices on tourism statistics, investment opportunities, and tourism marketing and promotion.

The Ministers also applauded the vigorous, pivotal roles of the ASEAN-China Centre, ASEAN-Japan Centre and ASEAN-Korea Centre in promoting tourism, people-to-people and cultural exchanges between ASEAN and the Plus Three countries throughout the year 2017.

Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Ali bin Haji Apong, Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism, expressed his appreciation to the Ministers of ASEAN Tourism Plus 3 for their tourism cooperation and work activities such as the implementation of the 2017 ASEAN-China Year of Tourism Cooperation, ASEAN-Japan Tourism Cooperation and ASEAN-ROK Tourism Collaboration that have all increased the competitiveness of ASEAN as single tourist destination. Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Ali also added that Brunei Darussalam looked forward to working further closely in strengthening the areas of promotion, capacity building, quality services and investment in the tourism sector between ASEAN and Plus Three countries.

It was also reported by Mr Keum Gihyung, Director General Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Republic of Korea that according 2017 Korean Tour Trend Report, Skyscanner, Brunei Darussalam has emerged to be one of the top rising destinations for Korea Outbound Tour Trends. This was largely due to the introduction of chartered flights to Korea and the publicity gained through media platforms of hosting popular Korean TV shows .



ASEAN India Cooperation

The Ministers noted the steady growth in tourism exchange between ASEAN and India in 2016 where the preliminary total number of arrivals from India to ASEAN was 3.5 million, an increase of 6.1 per cent as compared to 2015. While on the other hand, influx of ASEAN tourists in 2016 increased by 6.5 per cent compared to 2015 and reached 746,069.

The increase of tourism exchange between ASEAN and India has been attributed by enhanced air connectivity between cities in ASEAN and India. In further strengthening this trend, the Ministers supported initiatives undertaken by transport ministers to conclude ASEAN-India Air Transport Agreement and ASEAN-India Maritime Transport Agreement.

Travex ASEAN Tourism Forum

A travel exhibition (Travex) was also held from 24th – 26th January 2018 with the theme of “*ASEAN – Sustainable Connectivity, Boundless Prosperity*”. The exhibition was attended by 240 buyers, 650 sellers and 894 exhibitors. Brunei Darussalam was represented by the Tourism Development Department along with 2 tourism stakeholders namely Royal Brunei Airlines and Empire Hotel and Country Club. Brunei Darussalam was promoting its variety of tourism packages available as well as international events that will be held in the country in 2018.

ATF 2019 and ATF 2020

The Ministers noted that the ATF 2019 would be held from 14-18 January 2019 in Ha Long Bay, Viet Nam with the theme “*ASEAN – The Power of One*”. ATF 2020 will be hosted in Brunei Darussalam.