

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY
YB DATO' SERI MOHAMED NAZRI TAN SRI ABDUL AZIZ
MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE, MALAYSIA
19TH MALAYSIA TOURISM AWARDS 2014/2015**

**PUTRA WORLD TRADE CENTRE
17 FEBRUARY 2016**

Salutations:

YAB Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi
Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia

YBhg. Tan Sri Dr. Ong Hong Peng
Secretary General, Ministry of Tourism and Culture

YBrs. Mr. Wee Choo Keong
Chairman, Tourism Malaysia

YBhg. Dato' Seri Mirza Mohammad Taiyab
Director General, Tourism Malaysia

Members of the tourism trade fraternity
Members of the media
Ladies and gentlemen

1. Good evening and thank you everyone for accepting our invitation to be here tonight at the 19th Malaysia Tourism Awards.
2. I wish to extend a special welcome to the Deputy Prime Minister, YAB Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi for gracing this event. It's even more meaningful since you are the Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Tourism and were once the Deputy Tourism Minister from 2004 to 2006. It is an honour to have you with us tonight.

Ladies and gentlemen,

3. We are here tonight to celebrate Malaysia's very own "stars" of the tourism industry, people who, through their dedication, have made outstanding contributions to enhance Malaysia's image as a premier destination in the world.

4. This 19th edition of Malaysia Tourism Awards serves to acknowledge industry and media partners for their efforts throughout 2014 and 2015. This edition brings with it some new developments to better reflect the global tourism landscape of today. We have added two new categories, namely, Best Travel Documentary and Best Online Promotion. In addition, the Best Foreign Tour Operator category has been expanded to recognise our outstanding partners. Meanwhile, the Best Tourism Publication also evaluates publications such as coffee table books and guide books, besides tourism magazines.
5. During the nomination period in mid-2015, we received a total of 590 nominations, a figure that far exceeded our expectations. This was then followed by a thorough deliberation process by our panel of judges – all highly-respected industry stalwarts whom we were very fortunate to be working with. They ensured the highest standards of documentation, evaluation and judging process.
6. On this note, I wish to bring your attention to our panel of 53 judges. I offer you my wholehearted appreciation for your own contribution to the Malaysian tourism industry by lending us your time and expert opinion in selecting the recipients of the Malaysia Tourism Awards.

Ladies and gentlemen,

7. The years 2014 and 2015 were a critical period of promotion to meet our tourism targets of 36 million tourists and RM168 billion receipts by the year 2020. 2014 was Visit Malaysia Year, while 2015 was the Malaysia Year of Festivals.
8. In 2014, we recorded a growth in tourist arrivals with 27.4 million arrivals, 6.7% better than the previous year. Up until November last year, we received 23.1 million arrivals, a figure that reflects the challenging tourism landscape we had to face.
9. We are heartened, though, by the numerous awards and recognitions that the country continues to receive such as best family destination, best golf destination in Asia, best place to retire in Asia, best for medical tourism and leading destination in Asia, among others.
10. This all goes to show that the tourism industry in Malaysia is far more resilient than we imagine, even in the most adverse of times. I attribute this to the Malaysian Government's focus and dedication to develop

this important sector for the economy. In addition, the tremendous support and commitment of dedicated members of Malaysia's tourism industry have encouraged and motivated us to move forward.

Ladies and gentlemen,

11. Looking at the short term, our targets this year are 30.5 million tourist arrivals and RM103 billion in tourist receipts.
12. To achieve these targets, we are working closely with old and new partners to increase air connectivity, to explore new markets, to facilitate travel and to introduce new and exciting products and packages.
13. The opening of new tourist attractions will be a boon for us this year. Several new attractions are coming on board including Resorts World Genting's 20th Century Fox World outdoor theme park and Ipoh's Movie Animation Park Studios. Together with the new shopping outlets, hotels, and other attractions, we look forward to a good year ahead. In addition, the implementation of e-visa facility will also help to boost arrivals from China.
14. Besides mass tourists, we will also give more focus on niche tourism products such as sports, golfing, bird watching, medical and wellness as well as shopping.

Ladies and gentlemen,

15. I wish to take this opportunity to thank members of the tourism trade fraternity and the media for your support. Whether you get to bring home a trophy or not tonight, believe me that each of you are much appreciated for your contribution to tourism development.
16. Tonight's awards is a fitting tribute to all our trade and media partners for standing by us in our journey to make Malaysia a top of mind holiday destination. Without your support, we would not be able to do it. So, congratulations to all the recipients of the Malaysia Tourism Awards!
17. May this recognition encourage and motivate you to attain the tourism dreams and goals of 2020.
18. Thank you.

END

YB Minister to invite Deputy Prime Minister to deliver his speech:

It is now my pleasure to call upon YAB Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, to deliver his speech.