



**SPEECH BY  
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**IN CONJUNCTION WITH  
SEMINAR ON MALAYSIA AS A PREFERRED BIRDING  
DESTINATION 2015**

**SALUTATIONS:**

Members of the media,

Ladies and gentlemen.

Salam Sejahtera and Salam Satu Malaysia.

**INTRODUCTION AND PLEASANTRIES:**

Firstly, I would like to welcome all of you to this seminar, and I am delighted to see such a good turn out here today. Your presence here demonstrates your commitment and enthusiasm in positioning Malaysia as one of the world's major birding destinations.

According to studies conducted by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), the global tourism industry is increasing at 4% annually, while Nature based tourism is experiencing a rapid growth at 10-30% and this percentage generates around 200 billion a year and birdwatching industry alone is estimated to contribute USD 24 billion per annum.

Malaysia is blessed with an abundance of biodiversity, ranking 12<sup>th</sup> globally in terms of mega-biodiversity. There is tremendous potential in ecotourism with major focus on Birdwatching activities. A total of 795 species of birds have been recorded in Malaysia with over 60 species are considered as endemic birds. The richness of birds combined with the wonderful scenery and friendly people makes any visit an unforgettable experience for the veteran or first timer birder.

## **KEY MESSAGE: MALAYSIA AS A BIRDWATCHING PARADISE**

Malaysia has great potential to develop itself as the ultimate birdwatching paradise for the following reasons:

### **Malaysia's diversity of bird species:**

The world today has a total of 10,000 bird species where Malaysia has over 795 bird species, of which nearly 60% is in the state of Pahang and Langkawi Island. The variety of climates and habitats has resulted in this region as being extremely rich in birds and other biodiversity.

### **Malaysia's location:**

Our country also lies on the path of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway that provides strategic and important resting sites for migratory birds flying between wintering sites in Southeast Asia and

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Australia and the breeding sites in China, Japan, Korean, Mongolia and Siberia.

### **Malaysia selected as Important Bird Area:**

For those who are not aware, there are nearly 12,000 sites in 218 countries identified as Important Bird Areas. A qualified IBA must meet a set of standardized criteria based on the presence of species that are of worldwide conservation concern.

The Malaysian Nature Society has identified 55 Important Bird Areas in Malaysia covering an approximate area of 50, 944km<sup>2</sup>; 18 in Peninsular Malaysia, 14 in Sabah and 22 in Sarawak. It was reported that the local birdwatching sites in Malaysia have recorded increasing numbers of birdwatchers hence this indicates positive message whereby majority of visitors are becoming more receptive and acknowledge the importance of nature and wild life.

### **KEY MESSAGE: PROMOTION OF MALAYSIA AS A BIRD WATCHING PARADISE**

In our bid to promote as well as to create awareness of Malaysia as a Bird Watching Paradise, we will continue to participate in the International fairs such as The British Birdwatching Fair, Taipei International Bird Fair and Philippines Bird Festival.

Tourism Malaysia is also providing the necessary cooperation and support to further highlight the bird related events such as Raptor Watch at Tanjung Tuan, Fraser's Hill International Bird Race and the Festivals of Wings. ~~Thereby,~~ I hope these identified events will be an annual affair, Malaysia will be even more attractive to tourists and birdwatchers alike.

## **CONCLUSION:**

During this 2 day seminar, everybody had the opportunity to exchange knowledge on the latest developments, professional practices, techniques and strategies with fellow colleagues which will help to inspire our tourism trade members to develop and package quality birdwatching tours and activities. On the other hand, we must also remind ourselves that we must do our part of conserving nature and wildlife to ensure long-term sustainability of our eco-tourism products.

Once again, on behalf of the Ministry of Tourism, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to all and we seek your kind assistance to help us promote Malaysia as a tourist and birdwatching paradise among your local and foreign friends.

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Thus, let us all come together to synergize our efforts and resources in expanding this industry by playing an active role to put Malaysia on the birdwatchers' map as another great destination for birdwatching.

Thank you.

END