



ASEAN maps out homestay standards

Pilot testing to begin this year, full implementation from 2015

By S Puvaneswary

New standards for homestays in South-east Asia will be adopted as part of moves to create a single, quality tourism destination and to assist local communities in earning a living from tourism.

Agreed on by ASEAN tourism ministers at this year's meetings, the standards are based on inputs from their respective NTOs. They cover areas such as accommodation, cleanliness in food preparation, eco-friendliness and involvement of visitors in local activities.

In addition, prerequisites are that homestay operators be free of criminal records and in good health, while homestays must be in operation for at least two years at the time of application. There must also be at least five registered homestays in a village.

Pilot testing for the standards will begin this year followed by full implementation from next year.

Mohd Daud Mohd Arif, director of Industry Development Division at the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, said the standards are valid for three years after which it will be reassessed by ASEAN ministers and further enhanced if necessary. Malaysia is the lead coordinator for the homestay standards.

"Successful homestays will receive a certificate and a plaque is-

sued by ASEAN, which they can use for branding and marketing purposes," explained Ong Hong Peng, secretary-general of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, who is chairing the ASEAN NTO meetings.

The certification is offered free of charge to all homestay operators. Homestays must score at least 75 per cent during the assessment process to qualify.

Travel agencies welcome the new regulation.

Adam Kamal, deputy president of Malaysian Inbound Tourism Association, said: "Having these standards will help elevate the homestay programme among ASEAN countries and give overseas agencies and their clients confidence, as the homestays have been endorsed by ASEAN."

Viewpoint

What do you think of the new standards for ASEAN homestays?



"This will raise the standards of homestay programmes, facilities available

and tourist experiences. This will create a good and lasting impression on visitors experiencing homestays for the first time, as they are also a form of viral marketing with their use of social media."

Tan Kok Liang

Vice president – inbound
Malaysian Association of Tour and
Travel Agents



"It is important for the NTOs to have regular site visits to the homestays and reassess them

to ensure that standards do not fall.

Homestays in ASEAN provide a uniquely different experience for travellers who are adventurous and want local experiences."

Anthony Chieng

Managing director
Sunshine Borneo Tours &
Travel Brunei

Hot leads

Exotic tours on Straight Way's radar

Bangladesh-based Straight Way Tours and Travels' CEO, Md Rafeuz-zaman, is on the hunt for "exotic packages" in Malaysia, especially Sarawak, that feature "adventurous spots in jungles and forests" to cater to growing demand for destinations beyond Kuala Lumpur. Contact him at (880) 2982-2259.

ASEAN-Japan Centre imparts art of heritage, culture seduction

THE ASEAN-Japan Centre (AJC), in collaboration with the World Tourism Organization, has set in motion an exchange programme to help Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos sharpen their cultural and heritage appeal in a bid to encourage greater Japanese traveller interest in these ASEAN destinations.

The programme is the first of many aimed at developing products these destinations are rich in, noted AJC's director of Tourism & Exchange Division, Dananjaya Axioma.

"We have taken a group consisting of tourism academicians and heritage management (personnel) from the three countries on a fam trip to Japan in November last year," Axioma said, adding that participants attended a workshop and training seminar in Tokyo and site inspections of cultural and heritage attractions in Nara.

The activities are also expected to guide Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos in managing attractions with cultural and historical value.

"Thailand, Vietnam, the Phil-

ippines, Malaysia and Indonesia are already major destinations for Japanese outbound to ASEAN (so) we have to work with stakeholders of these three countries to find ways to increase Japanese arrivals."

Following these activities, participants are expected to develop and implement relevant programmes for selected cultural and heritage sites.

However, AJC has yet to meet with the working groups of Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos to obtain updates and discuss the next step forward.

Expressing support for the initiative, Union of Myanmar Travel Association chairman, Aung Myat Kyaw, told the *Daily*: "Japan is one of the main markets Myanmar is keen to develop."

Although Japanese arrivals to Myanmar is still a minute figure, it grew 123 per cent between 2011 and 2012. Aung believes that product improvements will raise traveller interest.

In 2012, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar welcomed 179,000, 42,000 and 47,600 Japanese respectively. – **Mimi Hudoyo**



Axioma: cultural, heritage edge



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MRA makes progress

A MICE competency certification and new regional secretariat are in the pipeline

By Mimi Hudoyo

Indonesia has proposed the creation of a MICE professional certification within the Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on Tourism Professionals, according to the chair of the ASEAN Tourism Professional Monitoring Committee (ATPMC).

Speaking to the *Daily* in an interview, Souhn Manivong, director general, Tourism Development Department of Laos' Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism – who represents Laos as ATPMC chair – said: "Indonesia is leading the development of this project (through a working group). Currently, it is preparing the competency units which will later be compiled with what other member countries have and be developed into a common ASEAN standard. (So far) we've learnt that Thailand has its own



Manivong: new focus on MICE

(MICE competency standards)."

Ani Insani, head of Competency Centre, Resource Development Agency for Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, said: "(The ministry and the MICE industry in) Indonesia feel it is important to have such standards as the industry is growing in the region."

Wisnu Budi Sulaiman, board member of Indonesia Congress and Convention Association, who leads the Indonesia contingent in the MICE competency working group, said: "On the conference side, Indonesia has established competency units for bidding, venue, registration and liaison specialists. On the exhibition side, we have existing standards for stand contactors and logistic specialists."

Supervisory level standards

are currently implemented across Indonesia, and managerial level standards are set to follow soon, according to Wisnu.

Meanwhile, preparation towards the full implementation of MRA by end-2015 is on track, said Manivong, who is also project director of the Greater Mekong Subregion Sustainable Tourism Development Project.

MRA's successful implementation would facilitate mobility of tourism professionals within ASEAN, and he estimates that some 2,000 regional professionals would hold ASEAN recognised certificates by then.

The agreement covers hotel and travel businesses and includes divisions such as housekeeping, front office, F&B and food production in the former, and travel agencies and tour operators in the latter.

Master trainers and assessors have been found for housekeeping, and the rest of the necessary components to facilitate the

MRA programme, such as training manuals and materials, for all other divisions will be finalised by April.

Further developments within ATPMC include the establishment of a regional secretariat to monitor the implementation of MRA and build capacity for the programme, among other things. Indonesia has been chosen as host country and the office will start functioning this year, although an official agreement among member countries will only be inked in 2015. The regional secretariat will also serve as a coordinator to help member countries source for master trainers in specific fields.

I Gede Pitana, chairman, Resource Development Agency for Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, said: "The Ministry has a budget to (kick start this regional secretariat) and prepare the building (for the office)."

In brief

New hotel at Inle Lake

The 90-key Inlay Garden Hotel will open at Myanmar's Inle Lake in March. During the soft-launch period, 44 rooms will be opened first. For reservations, contact Tin Mar Myint, who is also executive director of Thazin Garden Hotel in Bagan. Email thazingardenbagan@gmail.com or tinarmyint30@gmail.com. – **Xinyi Liang-Pholsena**

More rooms in Clark

Widus Hotel & Casino has doubled its room inventory in Clark, Philippines with the opening of a new wing last November, bringing room count to 233. Room sizes start from 38m².

Cristina Hildawa, director of sales and marketing, said: "Clark is like a mini Las Vegas because we have 14 casinos in the city alone." South Korea is the hotel's largest market, while there is growing demand from the US, she added. – **Lee Pei Qi**

ASEANTA guns for more events

ASEAN Tourism Association (ASEANTA) is aiming for its commercial arm, ASEAN Incorporated, to become a profit centre and take care of the administrative costs of the association.

President Mohd Khalid Harun said the goal is to organise more conferences and seminars that will bring industry members together.

"There should be at least two or three major events held every year, starting from this year," he said, adding that it would also partner media organisations. "This way, we will have official media, be it print or electronic, to cover our events."

ASEANTA Incorporated is co-organising this year's TRAVEX and ASEAN Tourism Conference together with Malaysia's Ministry of Tourism and Culture and Tourism Malaysia in Kuching, Sarawak. – **S Puvaneswary**

ASEAN tourism needs all hands on deck



Malaysia's minister of tourism and culture, Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz (centre), is joined by tourism chiefs from the other nine ASEAN countries. Adopting the theme *ASEAN – Advancing Tourism Together*, the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2014 will explore the sustainable development of tourism and look at what programmes can further support this initiative. Malaysia and its host city Kuching, Sarawak, is all geared up to welcome more than 1,600 delegates over the next few days.

Stepping up Russian, Korean language training

By S Puvaneswary

Plans are in the pipeline to enhance language training for ASEAN travel professionals this year, with more opportunities for in-depth studies.

A new Advanced Russian Language Learning course will be introduced, with studies at the Russian State University for Tourism & Service.

Meanwhile, the second Russian Language Course for ASEAN tour operators will be held

in Siem Reap, Cambodia during summer.

Yuri Kopylov, vice rector at Russian State University for Tourism & Service, said the two projects are financed through the ASEAN-Russia Dialogue Partnership Financial Fund. Both initiatives have received approval from all ASEAN member states and are now under consideration by the Russian government.

Yuri said: "The consultations with Russia's Ministry of Finance

are under way and there is hope that in spring, the approval will be secured."

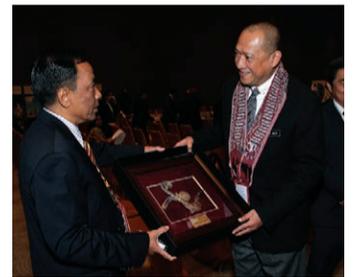
The Russian Language Course was first introduced in 2010 in Jakarta, Indonesia and comprised a three-month e-learning component and a month of classroom studies. Twenty-nine participants from around South-east Asia took part in the programme that year.

This year, the ASEAN-Korea Centre also intends to have Ko-

rean language courses in all 10 ASEAN member countries instead of the old approach of offering them to five countries a year.

Manisakhone Thamavongxay, head of the culture and tourism unit, ASEAN-Korea Centre, said this would make it easier to conduct follow-up language courses for attendees. Previously, the long gap between training made recollection of earlier studies difficult.

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M'sia in the spotlight

Visit Malaysia Year campaign kicks off with ASEAN Tourism Forum

By S Puvaneswary

Malaysia's tour operators and hoteliers are looking forward to the boost that the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) will deliver to the country, which is hosting its first international travel trade event during *Visit Malaysia Year* (VMY) 2014.

Minister of tourism and culture, Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, said: "This will be a great opportunity to showcase the destination as many international buyers will take time to see new tourism products in Sarawak as well as join post-tours.

"We hope that by giving international travel agencies first-hand experience of visiting the destination, they will be able to come up with exciting and attractive holiday packages for their clients in their respective markets and sell Malaysia, either as a mono destination or in combination with neighbouring countries, with more confidence."

ATF, which is organised by the ASEAN Tourism Association this year, is the best platform for

inbound tour operators to sell packages designed for VMY 2014 to international buyers interested in South-east Asia, pointed out Adam Kamal, deputy president of Malaysian Inbound Tourism Association.

"International buyers can experience first-hand what Malaysia has to offer, from budget to high-end."

Christina Toh
Vice-president
Malaysian Association of Hotels

"Agencies should think out of the box and take the opportunity to package programmes earmarked for VMY," he said.

Tan Kok Liang, vice-president, inbound of the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents, added: "Since last year, Tourism Malaysia has been promoting VMY in all its overseas markets, and this has created

awareness and high expectations that Malaysia has special events and programmes this year."

The line-up of events includes religious festivals, parades, carnivals, cultural extravaganzas and sporting events, among others (see our cover wrap).

Tan urged industry members in Sarawak to provide special discounted rates on accommodation and transportation, and other service providers to do the same for delegates.

"Do not see this as an opportunity to reap more profits, but rather to be a good host. The benefits will come as a matter of time," he quipped.

According to Malaysian prime minister, Mohd Najib Abdul Razak, the VMY 2014 campaign is intended to mobilise the entire industry and nation to move up the value chain of tourism products and service offerings while making Malaysia a top-of-mind destination.

The campaign hopes to achieve 28 million tourist arrivals and RM76 billion (US\$23.3 billion) in tourist receipts.

Numbers that matter

500 The number of international buyers expected at TRAVEX.

500 The number of ASEAN exhibitors anticipated at TRAVEX.

150 The number of ASEAN tourism officials attending the meetings.

100 The number of trade visitors at the show.

TTG stays young, fresh at 40

TTG A more attractive, engaging and mobile-optimised ttgasia.com will be among the many new initiatives TTG Asia Media will roll out throughout 2014 as it celebrates its 40th anniversary.

The company's popular print titles, *TTG-mice* and *TTG Asia*, will unveil new looks and stronger content come February and April respectively, while *TTG Asia Luxury* will reach out to luxury travel buyers twice this year instead of just once. *TTGassociations*, a new quarterly publication targeting association secretariats will debut in April, and a commemorative *TTG Asia* supplement will be published on August 8.

As with all celebrations, there will be plenty of activities throughout the year for travel trade friends to partake in, from parties to fun runs.

TTG Asia Media will also extend its reach in the online sphere with Travel Trade e-Space, a virtual B2B travel mart whose inaugural edition will launch in Q1 with ASEAN suppliers. Roomonger, a B2B e-commerce portal which offers real-time room bookings with instant confirmation, will also be revived.



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High-level powwow By Patrick Tan



Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia's Nur Nadia Binti Aiyub and Siti Nadiha Binti Mamat



MP Singapore's Jason Ng and Myanmar Tourism Federation's Tin Aung Lynn



Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia's Amerjit Singh A/L S Bhag Singh and Saraya BT Arbi



Ministry of Tourism Cambodia's Ok Darariddh and Hoy Phireak



Ministry of Tourism Sarawak's Mary Wan Mering



ASEAN Secretariat's Lim Hong Hin and Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources Brunei's Md Riza Md Yunus



The Tun Jugah Foundation Malaysia's McKinley Davis Gerijia, Janet Rata Noel, Shirley Vilin Ikok and Dorin Linang



Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism Laos' Souh Manivong



Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia's Suzana Akmam Binti Selamat Amir, Rashidi Hasbullah, Hashim Bin Mohamed, Firna Azura Ahaputri Marzuki and Ahmad Fazli Bin Ahamad Nordin



Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia's Mohd Akmal Abd Malik

VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR 2014: A PERFECT FUN-FILLED HOLIDAY

Come 2014, Malaysia will celebrate its fourth Visit Malaysia Year (VMY) after three successful VMYs in 1990, 1994 and 2007. Visit Malaysia Year 2014 is the nation's biggest and grandest tourism celebration which will be packed with fascinating parades & processions, colourful cultural shows, fabulous food festivals, exciting sports & adventures, enchanting music & arts festivals, shopping extravaganzas and nature thrills.

Malaysia aims to achieve 28 million in tourist arrivals and RM76 billion in tourist receipts during Visit Malaysia Year 2014. It will be an early boost to help transform Malaysia into a high-income country by 2020. In 2012, tourism was the second largest foreign exchange earner and the seventh largest contributor to the Malaysian economy, raking in RM47.2 billion of Gross National Income (GNI).

Themed "Celebrating 1Malaysia Truly Asia", Visit Malaysia Year 2014 will highlight the country's pillar of strength, namely its diverse cultures and multi-racial communities living in harmony and peace in one beautiful and blessed country. Aply known as the long-nosed monkey, the proboscis monkey has been selected as the official mascot for Visit Malaysia Year 2014. The proboscis monkey best encapsulates the essence of Malaysia Truly Asia with its diverse skills. The use of this mascot lends credence and recognition to wildlife and instill interest among tourists for the gift of nature as a national tourism asset.

Let's look forward to a year full of festivities and celebrations,

all offering a plethora of colours, thrills & excitement. In tandem with the campaign's theme "Celebrating 1Malaysia Truly Asia", tourists will experience a unique blend

of cultural mix, showcasing the very essence of Asia, leaving them with wonderful stories to share and memories to treasure.

For more information or enquiries, please contact Visit Malaysia Year 2014 Secretariat, at 1300 88 5050 or log on to www.vmy2014.com

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ASEAN in the spotlight

From nature's wrath to new business opportunities, here are 2013's top headlines

Philippine tourism suffers fallout from natural disasters

Although major tourism hotspots in central Philippines have escaped much of the destruction brought on by Super Typhoon Haiyan on November 8 and a 7.2-magnitude earthquake on October 15, bookings plummeted for Boracay, Cebu and Palawan, while cancellations continued into late November – the traditional peak travel season for the destination. Travel advisories issued by European countries are expected to further hurt arrivals. Relly Magundayao, general manager of Wow Philippines Travel Agency, said: "Many travellers think the entire Philippines is a disaster zone but it's not. The country is big, comprising 7,107 islands – we have to let the travellers know that." Part of efforts to win back travellers is the Tourism Promotions Board's continued promotion of the country as a tourism destination. Properties in the Visayas are also offering discounts to attract clients.

Paving path to recovery, TTG Asia, November 29 – December 12, 2013

Strong Philippine representation at WTM to ride on PAL's resumption of flights to the UK

The return of Philippine Airlines (PAL) to London with five-times-weekly services on November 4 after 15 years was the opportunity the trade had been waiting for to regain its share of the European market. Leaping in to make the most of this reinstated air connectivity, the Philippines' Department of Tourism (DoT) led a contingent of 15 tour operators and 15 properties to World Travel Market (WTM) and showcased six to seven major destinations. It was the DoT's second salvo on the European market, following the Birmingham Dive Show in late October. The Tourism Promotions Board also shared that it would partner PAL to increase the number of fam trips from the UK in the final quarter of 2013. DoT predicted a 65 per cent increase in European traffic to about 575,000 in 2013 and the doubling of arrivals to 700,000 in 2014.

Philippine operators seize European opportunities, TTG Asia, November 1 – 14, 2013



Congested NAIA gets travel players worried

Philippine travel players urged a speedy resolution to the congested Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) in Manila, a situation that had disabled some airlines from flying or increasing their frequencies due to a lack of slots for landing and takeoffs. Data from the Manila International Airport Authority found that while NAIA's runway has an average capacity of 36 landings and takeoffs per hour, actual events could reach 50 per hour in the day. Travel players warned that the airport's congestion could cause the Philippines to fail in its attempt to achieve its tourism arrival targets of 5.5 million in 2013 and 10 million in 2016.

Full-house NAIA vexes travel trade, TTG Asia, August 9 – 22, 2013



Malaysian operators invest in Eastern Europe

Encouraged by new flights to Eastern European destinations mounted by Emirates and Qatar Airways, which already operate services to Malaysia, Malaysian inbound players started to see even greater business potential from that part of the world and responded with stronger sales and marketing efforts. Diethelm Travel Malaysia increased its marketing reach in Eastern Europe; Panorama Tours Malaysia hired a Hungarian sales manager to cover the region; and Luxury Tours Malaysia appointed a marketing representative in Romania to court leisure and MICE business from Eastern Europe.

Eastern Europe warms up to Malaysia, TTG Asia, April 19 – May 2, 2013

Thailand's inbound business stays intact despite street protests, travel advisories

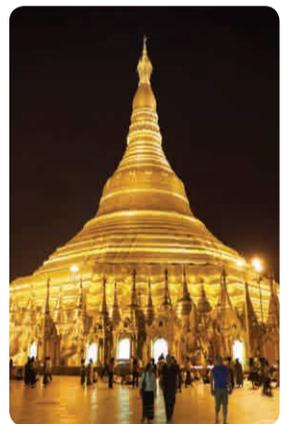
Street protests gripped Bangkok again in November. While the riots disrupted traffic in some parts of the city, they had minimal impact on tourism, noted inbound operators. Low-level travel advisories issued by nine countries, including Singapore, against travel to Bangkok also did little to dent arrival numbers.

Business as usual in Bangkok, TTG Asia, November 15 – 28, 2013

Opening of four new Thailand-Myanmar land borders inspires new overland products

Inbound operators sprinted into action to create new tours that connect Thailand and Myanmar after the latter opened up four land borders it shares with Thailand. Targeting travellers seeking soft adventure and cultural experiences, most traffic was expected to flow from Thailand into Myanmar, where visitors would likely leave by air from Yangon and Mandalay. At press time, Khiri Travel had launched a coach tour between Sukhothai and Yangon, while Exotissimo Travel started presenting overland tour options to more adventurous clients.

More Thai-Myanmar tours, TTG Asia, October 4 – 17, 2013



Shwedagon Temple Pagoda in Yangon

Asian inbound players brace for short-term fall in Chinese bookings

News emerged in late August that Beijing would implement a new tourism policy in October to protect the interests of Chinese travellers, with regulations stipulating that travel agencies are "prohibited from organising tourism activities and luring tourists with unreasonably low prices, or getting illegitimate gains such as rebates by arranging shopping or providing tourism services that require additional payment". Inbound operators in Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore braced themselves for a temporary dip in bookings from China as package prices rose to accommodate the new requirements. The new policy stamps out shopping tours and the sale of optional activities, affecting guides and coach drivers who earn commissions as part of their income.

China rules out zero-cost tours, TTG Asia, September 6-19, 2013

ASEAN focuses on experiential, creative themes for intra-region itineraries

ASEAN unveiled plans to promote multi-country experiential travel in the South-east Asian region as a key focus of the 10-member association's tourism strategy, in the run-up to the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. The intra-region itineraries offered by an initial list of 20 tour operators will be packaged under six different themes, including The Tastes of Southeast Asia; ASEAN, a Tropical Paradise; Experience Diverse Traditions; Sport and Relaxation; and Diverse Contemporary Creativity.

ASEAN grows intra-region itineraries, TTG Asia, July 26 – August 8, 2013

Forest fires in Sumatra throw blanket of haze over Indonesia's neighbours

An acrid haze created by forest fires in Sumatra, Indonesia blanketed parts of Malaysia and the whole of Singapore for days since June 15, causing some tourists to cancel or postpone their travel plans and outdoor attractions to suspend operations. The haze, said to be the worst in history, brought air pollution readings in Singapore soaring past 400 on June 21, while in Muar, Johor, the index rose to 750 on June 23 – all falling under the hazardous range according to the countries' environment ministries.

Choking smoke haze stifles tourism, TTG Asia, June 28 – July 11, 2013



Hannah Koh

DECEMBER

NOVEMBER

OCTOBER

SEPTEMBER

AUGUST

JULY

JUNE

MAY

APRIL

Brighter skies for Philippine aviation and tourism sector

Philippine tour operators cheered when the International Civil Aviation Organization lifted its air safety concerns on the country and the Philippine president followed soon after with a decision to scrap the common carrier tax (CCT). A rise in longhaul arrivals was anticipated, while foreign airlines were said to have expressed interest in flying to the Philippines should both the CCT and gross Philippine billings tax – mechanisms that penalised foreign carriers – be removed. However, to-date, no European carriers have resumed flights to the country on account of the abolished taxes.
Phil opens for longhaul flights, TTG Asia, March 22 – April 4, 2013.

APRIL
MARCH

Spike in stop-sale notices from Thai beach resorts

German and Swiss tour operators at ITB 2013 in March reported a huge spike in stop-sale notices from beach resorts in Thailand, which they said was hindering the growth of European business. Luzi Matzig, group CEO of Asian Trails, confirmed the observations of both Hotelplan and Kuoni Switzerland, saying that there were now 12-25 daily notices, compared to only two to five a day in the past. Increased competition for rooms from Asian and other emerging markets, new ways to distribute and maximise stock, and limited room supply were chief reasons.
Jump in stop sales for Asia, TTG Asia, March 8-21, 2013.

Most read ASEAN stories in 2013

- 1 Singapore's tourism growth slows** *(March 14, 2013)*
Singapore's tourism arrivals and receipts fall to single-digit growth in 2013, with trade sources citing high room rates as a deterrent.
- 2 Bangkok on higher alert** *(November 27, 2013)*
Despite political tensions escalating in Bangkok and travel advisories against Thailand, tour operators report business as usual.
- 3 Management of Le Méridien Khao Lak to change hands** *(January 9, 2013)*
Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide to cease managing Le Méridien Khao Lak in January 2014.
- 4 Malaysia not fretting about drop in visitors from S'pore** *(July 23, 2013)*
Tourism Malaysia is unfazed by the fall in arrivals from Singapore as Malaysia gears up for Visit Malaysia Year 2014.
- 5 Singapore attractions fall victim to haze** *(June 21, 2013)*
The haze descends on Singapore, decreasing visitorship to tourist attractions and forcing attractions to suspend operations.
- 6 THAI airplane skids on landing, 13 injured** *(September 9, 2013)*
Thai Airways International launches investigation after plane skids off runway at Suvarnabhumi airport on landing.
- 7 Malindo Air bumps up capacity to East Malaysia** *(March 18, 2013)*
Launch of Malindo Air raises capacity on routes out of Kuala Lumpur to Sabah and Sarawak.
- 8 Manila airport deemed worst in Asia** *(August 16, 2013)*
Ninoy Aquino International Airport receives the unflattering title of worst airport in Asia, according to travellers polled by Agoda.
- 9 Philippines introduces long-stay visa** *(June 24, 2013)*
The Philippines to allow temporary visitors to extend visa validity by six months after the expiry of the standard 21-day visa.
- 10 Bankrupt Batavia Air ceases operation** *(January 31, 2013)*
Indonesia's Batavia Air stops operations at midnight today.

Culled from *TTG Asia Online* page views between January 1 and December 13, 2013

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Park Hotel Clarke Quay • Park Hotel Alexandra (2015)
Park Hotel Farrer Park (2015)

CHINA : Grand Park Kunming • Grand Park Wuxi • Grand Park Xian
HONG KONG : Park Hotel Hong Kong JAPAN : Grand Park Otaru

Discover Love



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Looking at the big pic

ASEAN ministers outline the hopes and challenges of AEC as 2015 looms



Thong Khon
Minister of tourism, Cambodia



Awang Yahya bin Begawan Mudim Bakar
Minister of industry and primary resources, Brunei Darussalam

How will the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) 2015 be a game changer for tourism in Cambodia?

The AEC will create one common market for ASEAN countries, which will be fraught with as much risk as opportunity. We will take the risk of more budget expenditure on Cambodian tourism promotion.

Our opportunities are: examining our value chain including procurement, operations, distribution, marketing, and human resources to identify our strengths and weaknesses; promoting *Cambodia – Kingdom of Wonder* together with *Cambodia Bay: the Rising Star in the Southwest*; and enhancing business communication with the proper audience using appropriate platforms.

How is the tourism industry in Cambodia preparing for AEC in 2015?

The tourism industry in the Kingdom of Cambodia is preparing for the AEC in 2015 in a number of ways which include: organising pleasant green hotels and high-end restaurants; setting up standardised public restrooms; building comfortable homestays; training tour guides (to achieve) suitable professional qualifications; developing tourism professional skills pursuant to ASEAN curriculum standards aimed at joining ASEAN mobility; arranging reliable tourist transportation; constructing environmentally friendly essential facilities in the coastal zone and eco-tourism area, and conserving and protecting tourism heritage.

ASEAN common visa – where is

Cambodia on this and what are your thoughts?

The ASEAN common visa will increase the inflow of foreign tourists to (this region and benefit) Cambodia. On the other hand, it will bring about the loss of visa revenue and trouble for the Department of Immigration through the security checks on immigrants from non-ASEAN countries, as some of them can impact national security.

What tourism areas/ initiatives will you focus on in 2014?

We will focus mainly on encouraging adventure tourism in the north-eastern eco-tourism area, mountainous areas and on offshore islands, as well as on driving MICE activities to Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and the coastal areas, offering guests and potential visitors plenty of business and investment opportunities.

More attention will also be paid to developing green tourism and positioning Cambodia as an attractive, eco-friendly and clean tourist destination.

What are the biggest challenges in tourism facing Cambodia today?

Although Cambodia boasts a great and diverse cultural and natural heritage, tourism human resources currently do not meet the required standards, tourism promotion is not done widely on international television channels due to budget constraints, and there are inadequate financial, material and technical resources for tourism working practices. Furthermore, there is still a huge potential for sustainable tourism development. – **David Andrews**

How will AEC 2015 be a game changer for tourism in Brunei?

Where travel and tourism is concerned, the implementation of AEC presents a few major game changers namely: improved regional cooperation and synergies; cooperation at government as well as private sector levels; enhanced efficiencies, dynamism and competitiveness; and the enhanced quality and quantity of tourism product offerings as a single ASEAN destination.

How is the tourism industry in Brunei preparing for AEC in 2015?

Brunei has developed a series of master plans such as the Tourism Master Plan and Bandar Seri Begawan Development Master Plan in 2011, intended to provide the catalyst for enhanced private sector investment in tandem with the momentum created by government-led economic initiatives.

Brunei has also established the foundation for talent evolution in its human resources and workforce through its national strategic policy direction. Brunei is actively implementing initiatives towards improving governance; making the business and investment environment more attractive, such as levelling the playing field on corporate taxes as well as addressing cumbersome regulations that slow down permits and licensing procedures; and enhanced use of technology and reducing red tape.

ASEAN common visa – where is Brunei on this and what are your thoughts?

There is little doubt that the ASEAN common visa will contribute positively and is very much in line with the move towards ASEAN as a single destination for business and leisure. However, there are also various intrinsic issues that ASEAN needs to address as a whole such as the different levels of readiness and maturity of infrastructure and systems among member states, and national security concerns.

What tourism areas/ initiatives will you focus on in 2014?

We will continue to invest our efforts in promoting investment into Brunei and the use of systems, operations, or technologies that are cleaner and support the overall national and ASEAN sustainability and green technology agenda.

We will also continue to support various initiatives undertaken by other stakeholders and parties concerned, with a view to enhance connectivity both at the national and ASEAN or international levels as well as to redesign, shape and implement high-quality training programmes.



What are the biggest challenges in tourism facing Brunei today?

Travel consumers worldwide are increasingly seeking experiential, life-enriching vacations that involve nature, culture, the outdoors and learning. This trend means tremendous opportunities for Brunei.

Therefore, the challenge is to enhance our brand value, reputation, uniqueness and market share in the face of higher market expectations and (to cater to) a market which is increasingly price driven, brought about by (the presence of) more and more similar product lines.

(We need to) ensure the seamless provision of a coordinated range of products and services throughout the tourism supply chain which goes beyond accommodation, transportation and excursions.

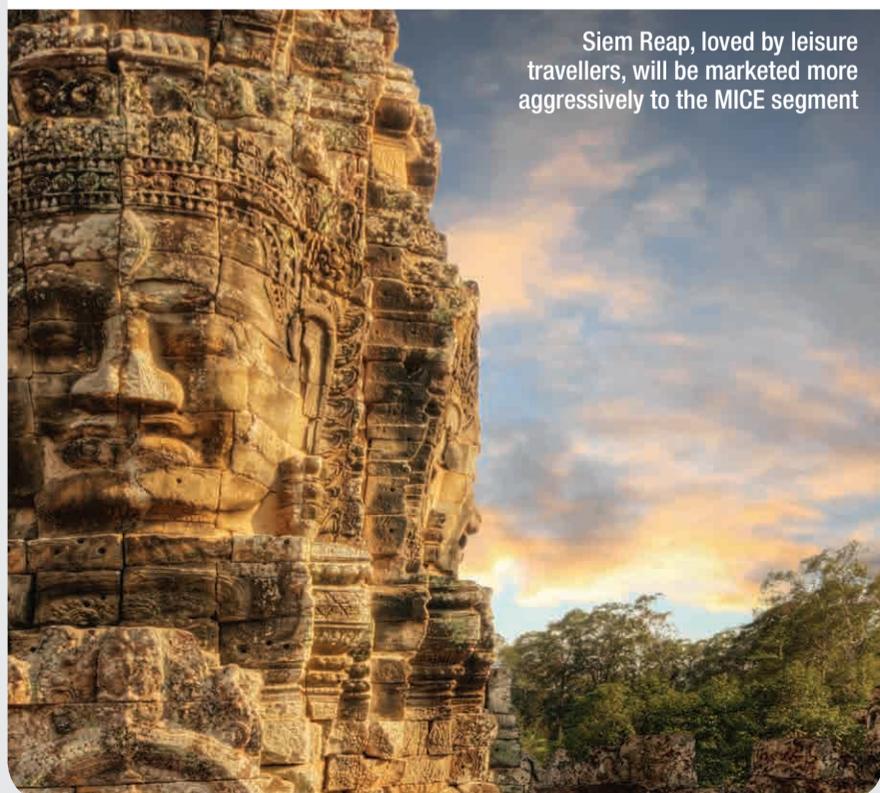
What is being done to raise standards of front-liner service personnel in the industry?

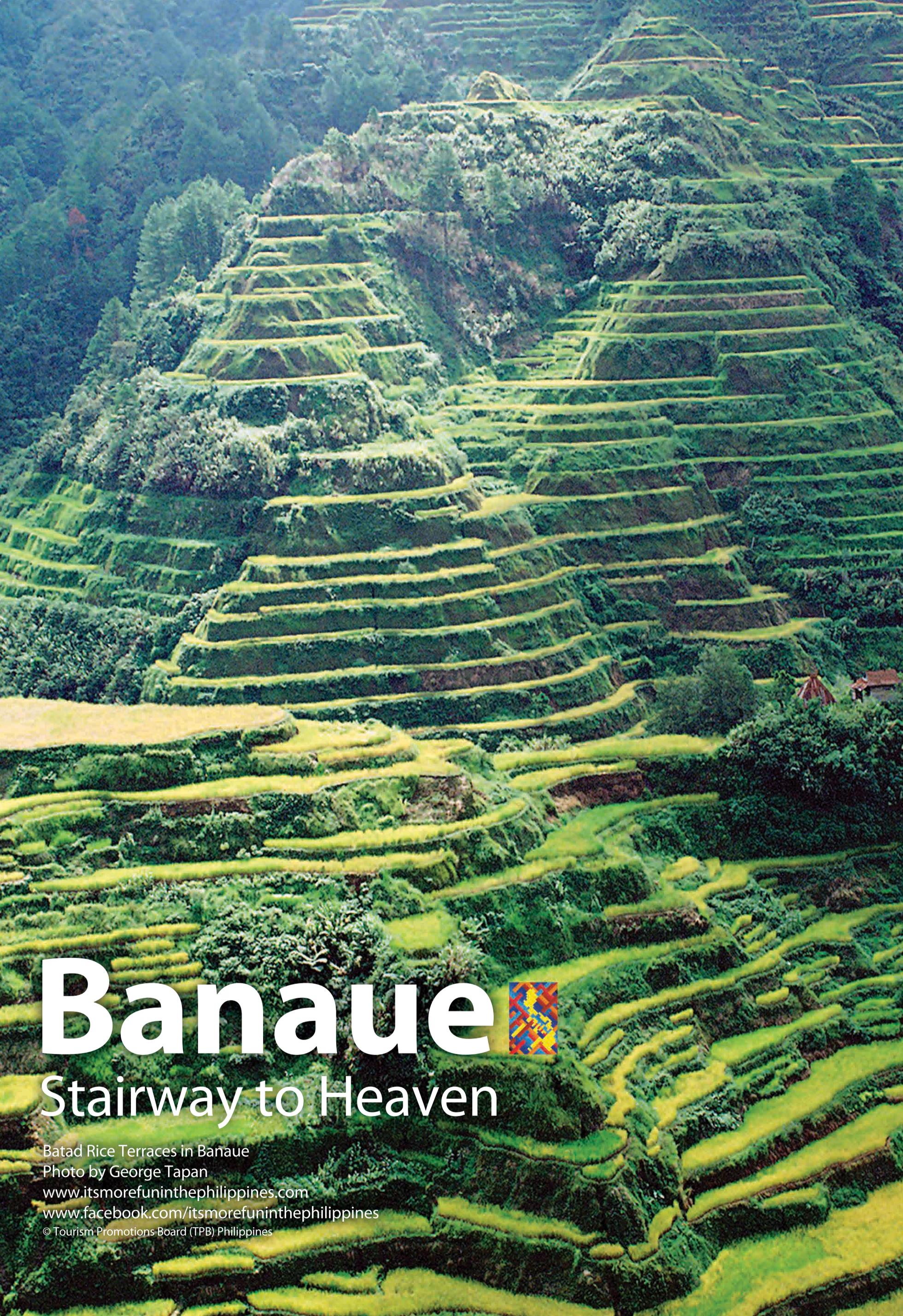
Brunei Tourism is collaborating with various stakeholders, education agencies and institutions including ASEAN-Japan and ASEAN-Korea Centres to provide specialised training and skills development programmes targeting existing front-line personnel as well as new and potential recruits.

In addition, we are tapping into the available training toolboxes developed under the umbrella of the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Agreement on Tourism Professionals development.

How are you attracting more foreign airlines to Brunei?

Brunei practices a liberal open sky policy on a reciprocal basis and we always welcome foreign airlines to operate out of our international airport. The Ministry of Communications is in the process of reviewing its policy on regional air transportation services provided by registered airlines such as our national carrier, Royal Brunei Airlines. – **S Puvanewary**





Banaue

Stairway to Heaven

Batad Rice Terraces in Banaue

Photo by George Tapan

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Mari Elka Pangestu
Minister of tourism and creative economy, Indonesia

How will AEC 2015 be a game changer for tourism in Indonesia?

At the core of AEC is the free movement of hospitality professionals. The tourism sector is quite advanced compared to the other 31 identified hospitality-related professions. (ASEAN) has developed the Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on Tourism Professionals, aiming to facilitate the mobility of tourism professionals within ASEAN based on competence-based tourism qualifications or certifications. Indonesia is the lead country in (the MRA's) development.

The challenge is then to make sure that the certification target (50,000 Indonesian professionals by 2014) will be met. We have issued some 47,300 certificates to date, so we are optimistic of surpassing the target. We also encourage industry associations to certify (their members' staff), because this is (the key) to compete going forward.

In terms of movement of services, investment and capital, we are ready. The hotel industry, for example, is 100 per cent open for foreign investment. Some other sectors (have complied) also with the 70-per-cent open requirement for ASEAN ownership.

How is the tourism industry in Indone-

sia preparing for AEC in 2015?

Our weaknesses are in infrastructure, cleanliness and legal certainty – these are what we need to develop in order to improve our competitiveness. We need to improve the industry certification standard for travel companies as well as travel consultants. All countries are facing competition between online and offline travel businesses and in my opinion, like it or not, they have to do both as the global trend is moving in this direction.

ASEAN common visa – where is Indonesia on this and what are your thoughts?

It is a big piece of work, of which I have not seen much progress, but it is the immigration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that are leading this sector, not us.

I'm not sure if this will be on the ATF agenda, but we will explore the possibility of setting up common visa agreements with a group of ASEAN member countries, as Thailand and Cambodia have done. We are going to explore this with Singapore and Malaysia.

If we cannot have a common visa for the whole country, we can probably do some parts of the country. South Korea has done this with China whereby the Chinese can enjoy a visa-free facility only when visiting Jeju Island. Similarly, we can open Batam



and Bintan for international travellers to Singapore.

We are waiting for Myanmar to enable travellers from ASEAN member countries to travel within the region without a visa, which in turn will increase intra-ASEAN travel and that really is part of the AEC. Hopefully Myanmar will announce this (during) ATF.

What tourism areas/ initiatives will you focus on in 2014?

We will continue with the development of the 16 National Tourism Strategic Areas, and our focus will, among others, be on a couple of areas in Bali. We need to assess and improve the conditions in the existing tourism hubs, like Kuta and Nusa Dua, to ensure their sustainability.

On the promotion side, we will focus on China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Germany – specifically China, as we received some 750,000 tourists in 2013 and are targeting close to one million arrivals from the market this year.

We have put up special strategies, such as launching a website in Mandarin and sales missions, for China. We will have more fam trips for Chinese travel buyers, covering destinations beyond Bali and Jakarta, which currently are frequented by 50 per cent and 35 per cent of the market to Indonesia respectively.

Other destinations to introduce are Jogjakarta for its culture, Lombok for nature and also Komodo. Special interest tourism like cruise, golf, sports tourism and MICE will also be our focus of development.

What are the biggest challenges in tourism facing Indonesia today?

Infrastructure, airport capacity and connectivity. Our challenge is to continue getting better connectivity if not direct flights from overseas and within the country.

We have set 16 National Tourism Strategic Areas in the country to focus on. What this means is we advocate the development of these areas. Therefore, I'm happy that Garuda Indonesia has expanded its network (to second- and third-tier destinations) in eastern Indonesia with its Bombardier and ATR aircraft. It really helps improve connectivity.

This is election year for Indonesia. Do you expect any impact on tourism?

If you look at our election history, we have had no record of chaos since we

embarked on the democratic route, starting from 1999. There was a bit of a decline in arrivals in 2009, but that was due more to the economic crisis than the election. We can expect a concentration of crowds at certain spots during the campaign period and consequently, traffic congestion, but that is about it. I don't foresee any potential negative impact on tourism.

The current cabinet term will end this year. What is the most important thing that you feel you need to accomplish before the term ends?

The formation of the national coordination team on tourism, as stipulated by the Indonesian law on tourism, is led by the president or vice president. The team will include a coordinating minister and several ministers of the related sectors. We have been developing an understanding among our friends (in government sectors) on the importance of tourism and we need to institutionalise this through the national coordination team.

Why is this important? During my two years as minister of tourism, what I have learnt from other countries is that those countries with successful tourism industries are successful because of the political commitment from the government, right from the head-of-state level.

In Thailand, the tourism minister is also deputy prime minister, while in the Philippines, the minister comes from an advertising background.

The other thing I would like to see (before the term ends) is a regional master plan on tourism for some regions. I also expect regions to set up regional tourism promotion boards (as stipulated by the law) and primary destinations, like Bali and Jakarta, to come up with pilot projects to show how the board should be run and run well. –

Mimi Hudoyo



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Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz
Minister of tourism and culture, Malaysia

How will AEC 2015 be a game changer for tourism in Malaysia?

The goal of AEC is regional economic integration by 2015. The AEC will transform ASEAN into a region with free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labour, and freer flow of capital. In this respect, tourism in Malaysia would definitely be able to reap the benefits from this free movement of people within the region.

In line with AEC 2015, ASEAN member states have formulated the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2011-2015, focusing on three different sets of strategic directions. The ATSP is an effort by ASEAN member states to ensure that the region will continue to be a successful tourist destination. With all ASEAN member states collaborating, rather than competing for tourist arrivals, South-east Asia can and will become a strong competitor within the global tourism environment.

As an example, over the past few years, we have been promoting tour packages involving two or more ASEAN countries. Malaysia introduced the 3-2-1 Heritage Tour Package – three UNESCO heritage sites (Malacca, Penang and Borobudur) in two countries (Malaysia and Indonesia) at one price.

AEC 2015 is a game changer as it will enhance the travel facilitation and connectivity within ASEAN, as transport is an important key factor in tourism. It has helped to accelerate the process of ASEAN Open Skies. This will mean more destinations, increased capacities and lower cost of travel, thereby encouraging more tourists to travel not only to Malaysia but also South-east Asia as a region.

How is the tourism industry in Malaysia preparing for AEC in 2015?

To facilitate the free flow of trade in services within the region under tourism, four sub-sectors have been liberalised under ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services which includes hotels, tourist resorts and restaurant services (four- and five- star hotels only); travel agencies and tour operators services (for inbound travel only); convention and exhibition centres (seating capacity of above 5,000); and theme parks.

To attract more foreign investment, a National Committee for Approval of Investments in the Services Sector has been established under the Malaysian Investment Development Authority. This Committee will act as a focal point to receive and process applications of investments in the services sector.

In addition, several initiatives have been

taken, among others, by Malaysia and all ASEAN member states. The ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on Tourism Professionals, signed by all ASEAN member states, will come into effect in 2015. In line with it, Malaysia has collaborated with relevant agencies in implementing the MRA and conducted awareness programmes nationwide to increase public awareness on ASEAN tourism objectives. This will enable the free flow of skilled labour and professionals in tourism within the region.

ASEAN common visa – where is Malaysia on this and what are your thoughts?

We are in favour of the idea as we feel that a single visa will allow longhaul travellers to move around the region without much hassle. This can in turn help to promote intra-country or cross-border travel. ASEAN member states complement each other as there are certain attractions that we have but others don't, and vice versa. As such, hassle-free travel within ASEAN will definitely go a long way towards promoting ASEAN as a region.

Several ASEAN member states have already started discussions towards a common ASEAN visa. We hope to see this single visa become a reality in the future.

What tourism areas/ initiatives will you focus on in 2014?

The game changer initiative is the *Visit Malaysia Year 2014* campaign, which will be a fun-filled year with events and festivities. This will be backed by six strategic directions:

- Sustain and grow tourist arrivals from ASEAN markets by encouraging more repeat visits, and grow markets with high expansion potential and segments with higher yield.
- Diversifying market mix by focusing on increasing market share of medium- and longhaul markets
- Facilitating and supporting efforts to improve air accessibility
- Growing yield per tourist by attracting high-yield tourists
- Having special promotional activities for *Visit Malaysia Year 2014*



- Enhancing support and collaboration with tourism partners

What are the biggest challenges in tourism facing Malaysia today?

The biggest challenge is maximising the potential of tourism to create wealth and generate employment. Towards this end, Malaysia needs to enhance its capacity and capabilities to provide products and activities tourists desire as well as to collaborate with ASEAN member states and dialogue partners to jointly develop and promote tourist products and services.

What is being done to raise standards of front-liner service personnel in the industry?

The government has undertaken several initiatives such as human capacity building, awareness programmes and roadshows on human capital development in tourism, continuous tourism-related education and providing funds for tourism-related projects.

How do you see tourism in Malaysia in 2020?

It will be a vibrant landscape. There will be a shift in focus that emphasises on quality (yield) rather than quantity (arrivals). Malaysia will have a variety of product offerings across five themes, which are: affordable luxury; family fun; nature and adventure; major events and entertainment, and business tourism. Tourism is a key economic sector contributing towards the achievement of vision 2020, which will see Malaysia transform into a fully developed nation.

– S Puvaneswary

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Sarawak Tourism Board

ACCOR EXPANDS ACROSS ASIA PACIFIC

Accor to open 200 new hotels by 2015

Accor has clearly established itself as the leading hotel operator in Asia Pacific. Here we uncover what's coming up for the group.

With a network of over 560 hotels across Asia Pacific and more than 200 hotels in the pipeline over the next few years, Accor has firmly established itself as the market leader in hotel operations in the region. Accor operates hotels across 16 countries in Asia Pacific and will soon expand to new countries including Myanmar and Tibet, as well as increasing its footprint in all countries in which it operates.

The Pullman brand has been a pace-setter for Accor with its vibrant, cosmopolitan and stylish character driving huge expansion across the Asia Pacific. The brand has already reached 15 hotels in China alone, and is set to open a further 26 hotels in China in by 2015. It is also the largest five-star hotel brand in Australia, with 11 properties in that country. In coming years, its rapid expansion will continue in India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Vietnam and more.

In 2013 Pullman opened in several landmark addresses such as the Pullman Hanoi, the group's first Pullman hotel in Vietnam. Located in downtown Hanoi on the Red River Delta, this trend-setting hotel features 242 rooms that combine first-class comfort with the latest technology, a Pullman Fit & Spa Lounge with sauna, jacuzzi, 24/7 gym and meeting rooms for up to 600 people.

With Asia Pacific developing faster than the rest of the world, Accor constantly evolves and upgrades its brands to meet the changing needs of travellers. A great example of this was the decision to redesign and tailor its Grand Mercure brand for regional travellers in Asia, with a strong focus on providing a local flavour. The Grand Mercure Mei Jue brand has reached 13 hotels in China in just



Sofitel So Bangkok - Thailand



Grand Mercure Shanghai Zhongya - China



Pullman Sanya Yalong Bay Villas & Resort - China

one year of operation and won an award for the Most Beloved Hotel Brand in China.

Its 'Discover a new authentic' tagline has hit a note with travellers by providing connections to local culture through visible brand signatures that focus on a local welcome, local wellbeing offerings, local food and local culture. These regional touches manifest themselves with a welcome in the local language, traditional dishes of the region, provincial artworks, music and dance performances, macarons in local flavours and wellbeing treatments

that centre around regional techniques and ingredients. Guests will also be invited to discover the local culture with a range of activities that are indigenous to the places in which the hotels operate.

The bespoke Grand Mercure network has been expanded into Indonesia with the launch of Maha Cipta and will soon follow in India and other markets as appropriate.

"The tailoring of the Grand Mercure brand demonstrates Accor's ability to activate the passion points of both local and

international upscale travellers, seeking for a more authentic travel experience," says Graham Wilson, Accor's Senior VP Sales and Marketing Asia Pacific.

Accor has also been rapidly increasing its footprint in the resort segment, and currently operates more than 140 resorts across the region, from private villas designed for romance to sprawling beachside resorts designed for family fun and from golf courses to vineyards to lush hidden oases that allow you to get back to nature.



Pullman Bangkok Hotel G - Thailand

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Novotel Surabaya - Indonesia

Brunei banking on Asia

Stronger tourism results in 2013 after the ASEAN Summit leaves the sultanate with a vacuum that Brunei wants to fill with high-yield Asian visitors, writes **S Puvaneswary**

Brunei Tourism



Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque in Brunei's capital, Bandar Seri Begawan

Brunei received a total of 121,563 air arrivals in the first half of 2013, compared with 106,694 in the corresponding period in 2012.

The top 10 source markets during the same period were Malaysia, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Australia, the UK, Thailand, India and Japan, collectively accounting for 100,428 air arrivals.

Longhaul travellers to Brunei were few relative to those from Asia-Pacific, which make up the bulk of arrivals to the sultanate. As such, Brunei Tourism wants to focus marketing efforts on the region.

Specifically, the NTO is aiming not for volume but well-travelled tourists looking for fresh experiences in South-east Asia by creating awareness for the destination's ecotourism, sports,

heritage and cultural offerings through fam trips for tour wholesalers and retailers from its key markets.

It is also promoting its culture and Muslim way of life to reel in Muslim travellers from China, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Hasa Incentives' managing director, Leslie Chiang, said his company had seen a 30 per cent increase in FIT travellers from the UK, though figures start from a low base. Most of his UK travellers stay an average of two or three nights in Brunei Darussalam and combine Brunei with another regional destination such as Malaysia or Singapore.

Chiang also noted that inbound Chinese FITs had picked up substantially last year, and was confident that this segment would continue to grow through 2014. "I am confident that arriv-

als from China will continue to grow in 2014. The new tourism laws introduced by the Chinese government late last year, which banned shopping tours, will not affect arrivals into Brunei Darussalam as the destination is known to tourists not for shopping but for its nature and cultural elements."

Intense regional competition is another challenge for the sultanate. Peter Feran, general manager at Radisson Hotel Brunei Darussalam, commented: "There will continue to be a shortage of quality tourism infrastructure to compete with neighbouring ASEAN destinations that are aggressively marketing themselves, in particular Malaysia."

Likewise, Orchid Garden Hotel director of operations, Mohd Iswandi Maaruf, opined that Brunei needs more events

more flight options, as those travelling on MAS could pay a through fare for onward travel to Brunei.

Ganneesh Ramaa, manager of Luxury Tours Malaysia, said his company stopped including Brunei Darussalam in its Trans Borneo tour package when MASwings suspended its services to Brunei.

The Trans Borneo tour package had comprised of three destinations – Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei – and promoted to European markets.

NOW With the suspension of the Kota Kinabalu-Brunei flight, RBA increased its services from daily to twice-daily.

Sugumaran Nair, manager, inbound & MICE division of Freme Travel Services, said RBA raised airfares as well.

Meanwhile, arrivals from Sabah fell 15 per cent.

He commented that it is more difficult to sell Brunei to longhaul and medium-haul travellers flying on MAS as there is no longer a through fare. Instead, passengers have to purchase sector fare, which is more expensive.

Ganneesh said individuals on the Trans Borneo tour package who are really interested in seeing Brunei Darussalam can purchase an add-on and travel to Brunei Darussalam overland from Miri.

However, requests for such add-ons are few.

FUTURE Sugumaran did not foresee arrivals from Kota Kinabalu increasing without an improvement in flight connectivity.

Viewpoint

What do you need from the NTO in 2014?



"We need more destination promotion, especially in key markets with direct flights to Brunei Darussalam. Brunei Tourism and all tourism stakeholders should actively participate at consumer travel fairs especially within ASEAN, which is our key market. There should also be more fam trips organised for international travel consultants and media to experience the destination first-hand in order to promote Brunei."

Sugumaran Nair

Manager, inbound & MICE division
Freme Travel Services



"What we need from the NTO in 2014 is an effective marketing campaign for tourism as well as a solid plan to improve the existing tourism infrastructure so that Brunei becomes a tourist-friendly destination. It needs to be able to compete more with neighbouring ASEAN destinations such as Malaysia. Brunei is an amazing place with a lot to offer, it just needs to be marketed effectively to ensure that it becomes an attractive and sustainable destination."

Peter Feran

General manager
Radisson Hotel Brunei Darussalam

and attractions of international standard to attract tourists.

"We are competing with neighbouring countries who have more products to offer," he lamented.

"The country's move towards implementing Islamic law into the national penal code may deter leisure tourists from visiting Brunei due to lack of under-

standing of sharia. Brunei Tourism's international promotions should also look at addressing the concerns of travellers on this matter."

In the meantime, Hasa Incentives' Chiang agreed that creating more destination promotions would be critical moving forward, especially in key markets with direct flights to Brunei.

Access | Fewer air options

Air accessibility to Brunei is largely dependent on national carrier Royal Brunei Airlines' network of 13 international destinations. These destinations include three longhaul destinations, London, Jeddah and Dubai as well as 10 cities within the Asia-Pacific region: Shanghai, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Kota Kinabalu, Bangkok, Manila, Melbourne, Jakarta, Surabaya and Singapore.

Foreign airlines that fly to Brunei are limited to Malaysia Airlines, MASwings, AirAsia, Cebu Pacific Air and SilkAir.

MASwings suspended flights between Kota Kinabalu and Bandar Seri Begawan in July 2013, slightly more than a year since it started servicing this route in February 2012. This route is now serviced only by RBA. MASwings continues to

operate four-weekly services between Kuching and Bandar Seri Begawan.

RBA increased flights between Bandar Seri Begawan and Kuala Lumpur from 11 to 14 weekly in May 2013. The airline took delivery of two Boeing 787 Dreamliners in late 2013, with another three scheduled to come in the year ahead.

The Dreamliner aircraft will replace the four B777 leased aircraft in serving existing longhaul routes such as London via Dubai and Melbourne.

Meanwhile, the B\$130-million (US\$102.9 million) upgrading of Brunei International Airport is scheduled for completion in November. When completed, it will double the airport's handling capacity from the current 1.5 million annual passengers to three million.

Tracker

An update on major issues and events from the past

MASwings drops Brunei

MASwings suspended its twice-daily flights between Kota Kinabalu and Brunei Darussalam on July 1, 2013, leading to a fall in arrivals from Malaysia, say travel consultants.

THEN Malaysia Airlines (MAS) subsidiary MASwings commenced twice-daily services between Kota Kinabalu and Brunei Darussalam on February 1, 2012, marking its first international route.

The flights complemented Royal Brunei Airlines' (RBA) daily services on this route and provided travellers with

Hotels | Room rates plateau

Brunei posted above average occupancy hotel rates in 2013, hitting 53 per cent for 1H2013. In contrast, occupancy stood at 46.1 per cent for full-year 2012, reported Brunei Tourism.

However, most hotels intend to maintain last year's contract rates into 2014 due to an expected oversupply of rooms and the absence of 2013's ASEAN Summit to prop up occupancies as in 2013. Room inventory in the country stood at 3,147 as of December 2013.

Said Peter Feran, general manager at Radisson Hotel Brunei Darussalam: "Unless Brunei can attract some large events that will bring in a significant number of people throughout the year then no, Brunei hotels will not be able to repeat the occupancy achieved in 2013." He said his hotel will increase rates nominally in 2014 due to the upgrades to 142 rooms completed in last April.

Mohd Iswandi Maaruf, director of operations at Orchid Garden Hotel, which recorded average room rates of B\$98 (US\$78) last year, also agreed that major events are needed to draw visitors to Brunei. In the meantime, rates at his hotel will be maintained through 2014.

But he was optimistic that occupancies would match 2013's levels, recording 44 per cent for the first 10 months of the year. The hotel's close proximity to Brunei National Stadium will help it leverage events held there to attract domestic and foreign guests participating in sporting events, educational fairs and international school competitions.

Brunei's hotel scene remains competitive relative to other South-east Asian destinations, said Khirul Zainie, managing director of MegaBorneo Tour Planner. "Travel consultant rates for a five-star property in Brunei are between B\$220-\$280 per room, with breakfast. In Singapore, this is equivalent to a three-star lower category hotel. For a four-star hotel, the travel consultant rate is between B\$150 to B\$180 per room, with breakfast."

Sugumaran Nair, manager of inbound & MICE division at Freme Travel Services, pointed out that hotels in Brunei do not have high and low seasons, with the exception of the five-star Empire Hotel & Country Club. The hotel imposes a surcharge of B\$100 during the Lunar New Year period, peak season for Chinese inbound tourists to Brunei.

Products

Homestay programmes

Many tour operators, such as Freme Travel Services and Sunshine Borneo Tours, offer programmes that take visitors to the homes of local communities so they can experience the local way of life. Tourists are usually taken on a tour of the house by the owner and are served lunch or tea. Interactive activities such as learning to make local handicrafts or a traditional dish can also be arranged with prior notice. Some itineraries also include a one- or two-night homestay experience. Homestays also benefit the villagers, who are paid a fee by the local tour operator for their services.

Ulu Temburong National Park

Families can travel by boat from Bangar to get to Ulu Temburong National Park. Within the park, visitors are kept off the delicate vegetation on the forest floor, thanks to a series of canopy walkways rising above the treetops. There are many experiences to savour here, from watching gibbons foraging along the river at daybreak to



This: Hestafeld/Brunei Tourism

Ulu Temburong National Park

taking on the Grade 1 and 2 rapids on the Temburong River.

Kampung Ayer

Kampung Ayer is a must-see destination for all, regardless of age. It is a historic settlement of more than 4,000 houses built on stilts over Brunei River, and is home to more than 20,000 people. Many of these houses have been in continuous occupation for at least 400 years.

Brunei History Centre

For royal watchers, Brunei History Centre has a wealth of information regarding the Sultans of Brunei, from family trees to replicas of royal tombs to reference books on regal matters. It opens from Monday to Thursday and Saturday, 7.45 to 12.00, 13.45 to 16.30. Admission is free.

Diving in Brunei Bay

Brunei Bay is a diver's paradise blessed with vast coral reefs and spectacular marine life, best experienced from March to Oc-

tober during the dry season.

Brunei Sub Aqua Dive Club is open to all certified divers, both locals and foreigners. Besides offering diving programmes, it also rents out dive equipment. Another good option is Poni Divers, a full-service dive and watersports centre.

Birdwatching

Brunei is home to more than 622 species of birds, of which 49 species are endemic only to Borneo, according to Brunei Birds. The organisation arranges birdwatching tours on request.

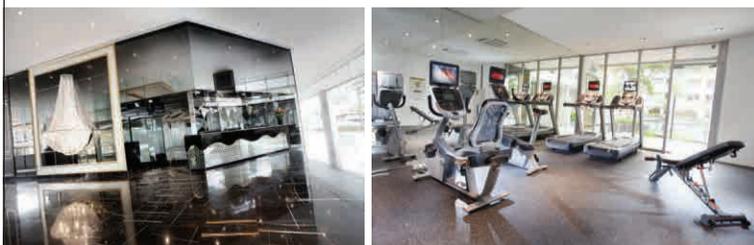
Spa treatments

Voted as one of the best spas in the world by Condé Nast Traveler, Thann Sanctuary at Bangunan Seri Kiulap offers a wide range of treatments and products to soothe and calm the mind, and relieve strains, tension and blockages in the body and skin. Treatments include massages for body firming, detoxification and sport recovery.



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Cambodia reaches out

Even as the kingdom aims for broader destination appeal, unresolved challenges in the tourism sector at home continue to hamper marketing efforts, reports **David Andrews**



Angkor Wat in Siem Reap is one of Cambodia's main tourist attractions

The Cambodia tourism sector has shown a steady rise over the past 12 months, boasting an 18.2 per cent year-on-year increase in international tourist arrivals in the first 10 months of 2013, according to official statistics.

Gregoire Imberty, general manager of Exotissimo Travel Cambodia, confirmed the trend. "We experienced a similar growth within the inbound sector, driven by a few key markets and a steady climb from most European clients. Flight options have also increased within the Asia region, opening up new markets such as Hong Kong," he said.

On the MICE market, he commented: "The MICE sector is still doing really well but slightly underperformed in 2013 compared to 2012, which had been exceptional for Exotissimo Cambodia. This is mainly out of our control since MICE is a very cyclical market where fashions change quite quickly and new activities become desirable.

"We are also often not in touch with the final decision maker who has to choose among several destinations across the world for the same given event. However, prospects for 2014 are looking positive with several events already confirmed and more to come!"

Yet such optimism and positive growth in arrivals belie a host of challenges that Cambodia must tackle urgently.

These include the management of the droves of visitors to the Angkor temples during peak season, the need for the continu-

Viewpoint

What do you need from the NTO in 2014?



"It'd be great to give more exposure to Cambodia on the international scene as other NTOs in the region are quite active in advertising and attending tradeshows. It's also very important for the future of the Cambodia tourism industry to create more awareness about the destination and not solely rely on the Angkor temples."

Gregoire Imberty
General manager
Exotissimo Travel Cambodia

"Here at Shinta Mani Club and Resort, we would love to have a stronger emphasis on the key markets. Markets like Europe and the US are still largely untapped and it would help if Cambodia was promoted as a safe destination full of culture and 'mystique'. We experience daily the general misperceptions of Cambodia – it is therefore missing out on potential tourist arrivals and thus, revenue."

Christian de Boer
General manager
Shinta Mani Club and Resort, Siem Reap

ous development of roads, hotels and further infrastructure, and increasing the number of tour guides that speak languages other than French and English.

The last is a continual issue that can limit the international audience to which travel agencies are able to cater.

Another challenge is convincing potential travellers that Cambodia can and should be visited during low season.

Asian countries are growing dramatically in importance

relative to the West, but this has yielded its own downside.

Pierre Jungo, managing director of Diethelm Travel Cambodia, noted: "At a time when the traditional Western markets are losing importance, hotels which previously only catered for Western clients struggle to find a solution. How can they accommodate both markets at their hotels given that not all Asian clients mix well with Westerners? This is the hot question currently being asked."

Tracker

An update on major issues and events from the past

ACMECS visa

In January 2013, the ACMECS (Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy) Single Visa was introduced, allowing tourists from 35 countries to apply for one visa to visit both Thailand and Cambodia. It was seen as the first step towards an ASEAN common visa and intended to boost tourism in both countries.

THEN Tourist visas obtained at the embassies of either Thailand or Cambodia are valid for single entry into both countries, although fees still need to be paid in both countries. The single visa's only real selling point is that it saves time during

the visa application process for both countries.

NOW Since many nationalities are entitled to a 30-day visa waiver in Thailand, and an efficient e-visa service and visa-on-arrival facility are available in Cambodia, the vast majority of travellers do not make use of this single visa.

FUTURE Plans to introduce a common visa arrangement when the ASEAN Economic Community comes into play in 2015 – similar to the Schengen euro zone – are underway. If implemented, the region-wide visa will be more useful for travellers, though cooperation on border management to ensure the security of citizens and travellers will be a challenge.

Hotels | Missing midscale

Hoteliers in Cambodia remain generally positive about prospects for 2014. However, other trade players are tempering expectations.

Dennis Kam, director of sales & marketing at Le Méridien Angkor in Siem Reap, said: "We will be able to increase room rates strategically according to market demands though online channels. The destination would also benefit from more flight frequency from feeder markets in order to attract key MICE players. This would enable us to drive higher room rates."

Christian de Boer, general manager at Shinta Mani Club and Resort, Siem Reap commented: "I am expecting room rates to remain largely the same and Cambodia to still remain an enormously good value-for-money destination. This is especially in the (low season) when most hotels offer even better value for money."

The challenge in Siem Reap is accommodating the surge of traffic during peak season, especially when the Chinese mar-

NEW HOTELS IN 2014

- Sokha Hotel & Convention Center, Phnom Penh, 458 keys, 4Q
- Mittapheap Hotel, Sihanoukville, 500 keys

List of new hotels is by no means exhaustive

ket comes roaring in. Stephen McEvoy, managing director at Asia World, commented: "There are enough options in Siem Reap except during (February to April, September and October) when Chinese groups are most prevalent. It would be beneficial for us if there were some larger Chinese-focused hotel options."

Phnom Penh has a myriad of boutique properties with small capacity and a few excellent five-star options. However, Exotissimo's Imberty remarked: "The middle segment is not meeting expected standards for such a destination."

Said McEvoy: "We recently had an issue in Phnom Penh with an incentive group when we were unable to find a hotel with sufficient convention space."



Shinta Mani Club and Resort, Siem Reap

Access | Soaring capacity

Cambodia Angkor Air (CAA) has embarked on a rapid expansion of its regional network since late 2012. The national flag carrier launched its first international route in November 2012 with a daily Siem Reap-Bangkok service.

In January 2013, CAA started daily Phnom Penh-Hanoi flights, followed by a daily Phnom Penh-Bangkok service in February. It has also introduced a daily Siem Reap-Guangzhou service from September. New services to Shanghai, Guangzhou, Seoul and Busan are in the pipeline.

In October 2013, Philippines Airlines entered a joint venture with Royal Group to acquire a 49 per cent stake in Cambodia Airlines. The deal is set to intensify competition in Cambodian skies, as the new carrier is reportedly planning to launch domestic routes before expanding into the international market.

Vietnam Airlines started a daily Danang-Siem Reap flight from July 2013, while Lao Central Airlines plans to commence flights from its Vientiane base to Phnom Penh, although the launch date had not been announced at press time.

In October 2013, Dragonair launched a thrice-weekly seasonal service from Hong Kong to Siem Reap, while Air China has planned new daily Beijing-Siem Reap flights from December and Phnom Penh-Beijing flights from February 2014.

Meanwhile, Cambodia's LCC links have been pumped up considerably, with Thai AirAsia having rolled out daily Bangkok-Siem Reap flights from October 1, as well as Jetstar Asia breaking up its Singapore-Siem Reap-Phnom Penh route from October 27 for a daily direct service to Phnom Penh and thrice-weekly flights to Siem Reap.

Longhaul links are also on the rise. Germany's Condor Air launched a weekly service from Frankfurt to Siem Reap in November 2012. Qatar Airways has started a daily Doha-Ho Chi Minh City-Phnom Penh route since February 20, becoming the first Middle Eastern carrier to provide services to Cambodia.

Additionally, Cambodia Airports announced in late 2012 an investment upgrade of close to US\$400 million until 2020 for the airports in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville.

Products



Phare Ponleu Selpak's circus performance

Phare, the Cambodian circus

This has received much acclaim since its debut in Siem Reap in 2013. In May, a 400-pax Big Top tent was added to ensure shows can take place rain or shine. The daily one-hour performance starts at 19.30, showcasing productions by professional artistes who have completed Battambang-based NGO Phare Ponleu Selpak's vocational training programme.

Most recently, a café was added to offer three-course set meals for spectators' enjoyment before/after the show.

Flight of the Gibbon

In June, Flight of the Gibbon expanded its operations beyond Thailand to launch its Cambodian debut in Siem Reap. The tours are designed to enable adventure seekers access to the rainforest through an exciting combination of tree houses, platforms, cables, sky bridges and abseils, while protecting the ecosystem.

Google Street View

Google has announced its plan to launch Google Street View in Cambodia, which will become the 51st country to be added to

the Internet giant's portfolio. Street View camera cars have already started capturing images around the capital, while the 400km² Angkor complex will also be mapped. While no date has been given on the launch of the Cambodia project, the programme is expected to be a tool in attracting potential tourists.

Cruising the Mekong

Phnom Penh-based Mekong Secret Cruises will begin operating new Cambodia and Vietnam cruises on the Le Tamarin from February 2014. Sailing along the Mekong River between the delta and the Tonle Sap Lake, the 39m vessel can host a maximum of 28 passengers in 14 cabins, with three different programmes for travellers to choose from.

Launching in early 2014 by Aqua Expeditions, the Aqua Mekong is a 60m luxury vessel offering 20 suites, each measuring 30m² with bathrooms, outdoor balconies and floor-to-ceiling windows. Sailing from Siem Reap to My Tho (near Ho Chi Minh City) via Phnom Penh, the vessel will offer three-, four- and seven-day itineraries.

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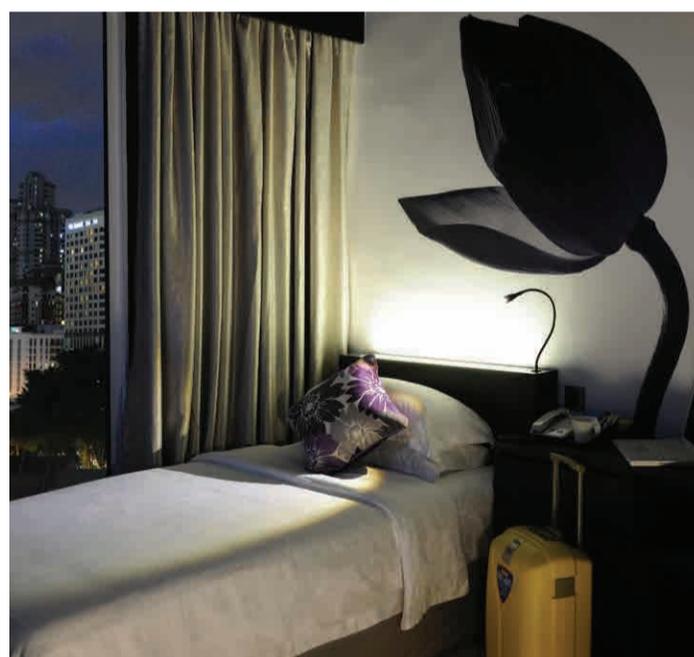
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Budget brightens up

Gone are the days when budget hotels are sniffed at by both property developers and tourists. Economy has never been sexier – as these latest products show



Clockwise from left: Zest Hotel, Indonesia; The BnB, Indonesia; Le Apple Boutique Hotel, Malaysia



Zest Hotel, Indonesia

Brand DNA A new, unique and straightforward hotel product aimed at budget-conscious business and leisure travellers in both the national and international markets. Hotels under the Zest brand will be of international standard, affordable, modern and minimalist. Its principle is offering convenience, comfort, cleanliness and safety to clients.

Average rate Targeting Rp350,000 (US\$31) to Rp450,000
Current network The first Zest Hotel is targeted to open in the first quarter of 2014 in Cengkareng, Jakarta.

Expansion plans Thus far, Zest Hotels International has signed 15 projects in 12 cities in Indonesia: Jakarta, Bogor, Bandung, Cirebon, Jogjakarta, Surabaya, Lampung, Batam, Bali (Kuta and Legian), Balikpapan, Manado and Ambon. The company is targeting more properties in Indonesia in locations such as the outer areas of Jakarta,

Semarang, Makassar and other regions.

Distribution strategy Direct channels – website with booking engine, call centre manned 24/7 and mobile – and indirect channels via OTAs.

The BnB, Indonesia

Brand DNA A new urban budget hotel whose concept is offering the best deal in a good location with fresh design and practical services. It aims to respond to the demand of today's urban explorers for simplicity and practical facilities.

The hotel's unique selling points are Sleep Well (comfortable bed, separate walk-in shower, practical amenities), Urban Service (one-stop guest service contact, in-room safe, free Wi-Fi), Good Location (business district, shopping, food and entertainment options) and Pay Less.

Average rate Rp399,000 (US\$36)

Current network The BnB Jakarta Kelapa Gading is the first property in operation so far.

Expansion plans Four more hotels are in the pipeline in Bandung and Bali. Construction is expected to start soon.

Distribution strategy Through offline and online distribution channels supported by dynamic pricing and viral communications.

J Hotel, Indonesia

Brand DNA 'Budget hotel plus' offering One Brand, Three Concepts: Leisure, Business and Industrial, i.e. the property can be located in leisure destinations catering for families, in the strategic area of a city targeting corporate travellers and in industrial areas catering for businessmen on site visits.

Average rate Rp395,000 rupiah (US\$34) to Rp550,000, depending on location

Current network Three pro-

jects are to start construction soon in Semarang, Cikarang and Cengkareng and are targeted to open in 3Q2014.

Expansion plans 50 hotels within 10 years, including outside Indonesia in countries such as Singapore and Bangkok, destinations Indonesians like to travel to.

Distribution strategy Ninety per cent direct and the rest commissionable to travel agencies.

Le Apple Boutique Hotel, Malaysia

Brand DNA A property with 53 non-smoking rooms located in Bukit Bintang, the shopping and business district. Zen-inspired design, clean rooms, free high-speed Wi-Fi and satellite TV. The hotel targets business and leisure travellers looking for affordable and clean accommodation.

Average rate From RM200 (US\$63)

Current network Owned by

Apple Vacations & Conventions which has two other properties in the city, the 55-room Cube Boutique Hotel and the 11-room Yard Boutique Hotel.

Expansion plans Apple has bought four shophouses in Kuala Lumpur built in the 1930s and plans to convert these into hotels, each under 50 rooms. Also under construction is a 250-room hotel in Malacca, scheduled to open in 2015.

Distribution strategy Online channels and Apple Vacations & Conventions' online booking engine, known as iAppleFlexi.com, account for 60 per cent of hotel bookings. Twenty per cent are walk-ins and the rest are corporate bookings and from travel agencies. The trade is sold rooms at net pricing and are free to mark-up.

Premier Inn, UK

Brand DNA Quality accommodation with no-frills public areas at

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- **Over 超过**
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Clockwise from top: Hop Inn, Thailand; Aqueen Hotel, Singapore; Premier Inn, UK; Hotel J, Sri Lanka



affordable prices. Standard rooms are 21.5m². Facilities include an all-day dining restaurant and bar serving breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks and refreshments, limited meeting rooms and either a swimming pool or small gym. Targeted at leisure travellers, families and business travellers. The only hotel chain to offer a Good Night Guarantee, i.e. a 100 per cent money-back guarantee if clients are not happy with their stay. **Average rate** US\$150 to US\$170 in Singapore, US\$50 to US\$75 elsewhere in South-east Asia **Current network** Whitbread owns and operates 650 hotels and 52,000 rooms in the UK, Middle East and South Asia, and is targeting 75,000 rooms by 2018. **Expansion plans** Hotel openings are planned from 2014 across South-east Asia, with the initial focus being on Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore. **Distribution strategy** Seventy-five per cent of sales through its

own proprietary sales channels, including website and mobile channels. **Aqueen Hotel, Singapore** **Brand DNA** Aqueen Hotels are located within heritage neighbourhoods in Singapore. Each location offers unique sights and sounds to explore. Targeted at value-conscious business travellers and holiday-makers, the mark of each Aqueen Hotel is to deliver comfort and genuine quality to its guests. Each room offers contemporary style and quality finishes with modern-day conveniences such as selected business news channels and Wi-Fi in-room and around the hotel’s premises. **Average rate** From S\$110 (US\$88) **Current network** Aqueen Balestier Hotel with 45 rooms and Aqueen Lavender Hotel with 104 rooms. **Expansion plans** Four new hotels at Paya Lebar, Jalan Besar, Joo Chiat and Little India are under

development. The 75-key hotel in Jalan Besar will open by year-end and the 162-key hotel in Paya Lebar will open in 1Q2014. **Distribution strategy** NA **COSI Hotel, Thailand** **Brand DNA** Conceptualised and managed by Centara Hotels & Resorts, COSI is an acronym for comfortable, open, sensible and individual. The economy brand will offer facilities such as free Wi-Fi throughout the hotel, ‘grab-n-go’ restaurants, seminar rooms for corporate guests and an entertainment corner in the lobby area for movies and live sports. Standard rooms will offer both twin and king-sized beds; rooms specially designed for families will also be available. **Average rate** 1,000 baht (US\$32) to 1,250 baht per night, depending on location **Current network** The first hotel set to open in 2015.

Expansion plans 30 COSI Hotels by 2020, initially in significant destinations in Thailand, then South-east Asia, China, Australia and New Zealand. **Distribution strategy** The brand targets cost-conscious travellers who usually do their own bookings online, including youths who are just starting their career, seniors aged 50 and above, families seeking value-for-money accommodation and corporates looking for limited-service accommodation and friendlier prices. **Hop Inn, Thailand** **Brand DNA** Launched by The Erawan Group, which owns 16 hotels operating under the Hyatt, Marriott, Accor, InterContinental Hotels Group and Starwood brands in Thailand, Hop Inn was conceived to meet the increasing demand for quality budget hotels in the country. Hop Inn will target the domestic leisure and business stay segments such as sales executives travelling

around the provinces in Thailand, while its subsequent expansion overseas will target both Thai and local travellers. **Average rate** 600 baht (US\$19) **Current network** The first nine hotels will be in Thailand along the East-West Economic Corridor, including Ubon Ratchathani, Mukdahan, Nong Khai, Udon Thani, Nakhon Ratchasima, Sa Kaeo, Kanchanaburi, Mae Sot and Lampang, with construction already started for the first five locations. All nine hotels are due to open by the end of 2014. **Expansion plans** The Erawan Group plans to open 25 Hop Inn hotels in Thailand and five more in South-east Asia within 2015. However, the group declined to reveal details of regional destinations targeted. **Distribution strategy** NA *Compiled by Mimi Hudoyo, S Puvaneswary, Lee Pei Qi and Xinyi Liang-Pholsena*

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Ministry of Tourism and Sports Thailand's Sombat Kuruphan (sixth from right) leads an enthusiastic Thai contingent



ASEAN tourism chiefs and industry thought leaders convene for the 17th Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers at Pullman Kuching



Ministry of Tourism Cambodia's Bou Chan Serey, So Visothy and Hoy Phireak



Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia's Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz



ASEAN Secretariat's Megasari Widyaty, Dory Widyanasari, Tran Dong Phuong, Lim Hong Hin, Eddy Krismeidi Soemawilaga and "Dee" Suvimol Thanasarakij



Singapore Tourism Board's Lionel Yeo (centre) and his team gives ATF 2014 a thumbs up



Tourism Malaysia's Linawati Ismail, PATA Thailand's Martin Craigs and Ivy Chee, Tourism Malaysia's Mohmed Razip Hasan and Razaidi Abd Rahim



Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism Laos' Saly Phimphinit (far left) and Chaleune Warintrasak (sixth from left) are eager to exchange ideas with industry colleagues

ASEAN Green Hotel standards get greener

Greater focus on resource efficiencies, new audit process in the works

By S Puvaneswary

The ASEAN Green Hotel standards, which promotes sustainable tourism practices within ASEAN member states and fosters sustainable tourism, is being reviewed for enhancements, subject to approval from ASEAN tourism ministers at press time.

The proposed enhancements, based on inputs from ASEAN NTOs, will focus on water and energy efficiency, use of green products in hotel operations and environmental policies, and spell out actions for hotel operations and human resource development in the areas of environmental management. An audit process will also be implemented to award points to hotels for the achievement of specific green goals.

Kobkul Pitarachart, Tourism Development and Promotion chief at the Bureau of Tourism Services Development, Department of Tourism in Thailand, which leads the working committee, said the proposed en-



Mohd Khalid: green inspirations

the qualification of hotels for the ASEAN Green Hotel Award, a biennial event that was inaugurated in Thailand in 2008.

Mohd Khalid Harun, president of ASEAN Tourism Association and immediate past president of the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents, opined that the ASEAN Green Hotel Award works well to boost the image of accredited properties, which translates to better yield.

He also believes that the awards will inspire hoteliers to upgrade their facilities with green features in order to meet

enhancements were necessary to move with current trends on sustainable tourism.

She added that having an audit process would streamline

standards and gain recognition.

At the 2014 edition of the award ceremony yesterday afternoon, certificates of recognition were given to 86 hotels in ASEAN member states. These certificates are valid for two years, after which hoteliers can submit their properties for re-evaluation.

Travel trade players welcome the new initiatives.

Surapong Techaruvichit, president of Thai Hotels Association, said the enhanced criteria was in line with conservation trends. "Going green (is an) investment but expenditures are reduced after that (and) returns are far more (than the outlay)," he said, adding that European travellers are drawn to green hotels.

CEO of DiscoveryMICE Malaysia, Lee Choon Loong, said: "Tourists don't want to stay in hotels that are damaging the environment. Green hotels will have a positive impact on the attractiveness of the destination and (bring greater) comfort (to) guests."

Indonesia's Plataran Hotels branches into management

Indonesian boutique hospitality firm Plataran Hotels & Resorts is expanding eastwards, having already secured a presence in Bali.

Established in 2008, the company had only recently forayed into hotel management in 2012 when it took over Plataran Cangu Bali, which it owned since 2010, according to Iwan Sitompul, corporate director of sales & marketing. This property is currently undergoing refurbishment, which will be completed next month.

"Our development strategy is to open new properties in exotic destinations in Indonesia," said Iwan. "We are not building city hotels, but focusing on developing low-rise, boutique properties in traditional Javanese houses."

Following the recent openings of the nine-villa Plataran Ko-

modo and the 51-room Plataran Ubud in December 2013, several new properties will be rolled out in the next two years, according to Iwan. The 30-room Plataran Bromo will launch in 3Q2015 while the 20-room Plataran Sumba will debut in 1Q2016.

In Borobudur, Plataran is building a 61-room hotel whose meeting and wedding facilities will augment its existing all-villa property nearby. This is slated for 1Q2016.

The company is also adding a six-pax yacht in February to its existing four phinisi boats to "offer an even more upmarket experience for guests", Iwan shared. All five vessels will be based in Labuan Bajo, located in west Flores in Nusa Tenggara, an hour's flight from Bali. – Xinyi Liang-Pholsena

Sound bites

"These tours are like our Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter collection – we change the programmes every six months to stay ahead of the game, just like in the fashion world."

Claudio Kellenberger, deputy managing director of Asian Trails Thailand, on the need to keep his experiential Explore! programmes fresh and updated.



When 2 Perfect Worlds Collide

The Sarawak Convention Bureau (SCB) helps connect associations, corporate organizations and government bodies with all the necessary elements to ensure your meeting is a success. For more information including how you can access financial support from the Sarawak State and Federal Governments to bid for regional and international association conventions, please call **+6 082 242 516** or visit us at www.sarawakcb.com.





DIETHELM TRAVEL GROUP



Diethelm Travel Group (DTG) has over 55 years experience of providing full travel services within the region.

DTG is a subsidiary of Diethelm Keller Holding (www.diethelmkeller.com), headquartered in Zurich, a closely held family company principally owned by fourth generation descendants of the founders.

Our extensive network has fully licensed and insured offices in Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam and has a worldwide reputation as a first-class travel service provider. DTG employs over 500 multi-lingual staff and serves thousands of quality tour operators across the globe.

WELCOME MESSAGES

Dear Delegates of ATF 2014,

A warm welcome to Sarawak, the Land of the Hornbill.

For the first time, delegates of the Asian Tourism Forum are meeting in Sarawak. This is an excellent opportunity to show the beauty and diversity to the movers and shakers of the tourism industry. I am sure that you will be delighted by this destination and will pass your experience on to your colleagues and clients.

If you need more information about the destination or you wish to explore Sarawak (or any other part of Malaysia) after ATF, please feel free to contact us; we would love to assist you.

Diethelm Travel Malaysia is a member of the Swiss Diethelm-Keller Group and was incorporated in 1979. The company is a full service tour operator and has a worldwide reputation as a first-class travel service provider. Diethelm Travel Malaysia operates offices in Kuala Lumpur (head quarter), Penang, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu. With its strong local presence, it has gained recognition as one of the market leader in inbound tours and MICE in Malaysia. We promise to ensure that you receive prompt and professional service.

I am looking forward to welcoming you at the stand of Diethelm Travel.

Best Regards,
Manfred Kurz
 Managing Director
 Diethelm Travel Malaysia & Singapore

Dear Delegates of ATF 2014,

With increasing demand for experience led activities, discerning travellers are looking to immerse themselves deeper in Asian culture. Despite our experience in arranging the popular city touring and beach holidays, we specialize in offering our partners tours that include sights, sounds and pursuits far removed from the usual.



Over 55 years of experience, coupled with local contacts and knowledge, gives us a unique perspective of travel and touring across the region, which we are delighted to share with you.

I look forward to getting to know your company and wish you a very successful ATF 2014.

Best Regards,
Richard R Brouwer
 Chief Executive Officer
 Diethelm Travel Group

WHO IS ATTENDING ATF FROM DIETHELM TRAVEL GROUP

We have a wide range of expertise on our stand for both Malaysia and Asia and would be very pleased to hear from you.



Manfred Kurz
 Managing Director
 Diethelm Travel
 Malaysia & Singapore



Daniela Loher
 Director
 Sales & Marketing
 Diethelm Travel Malaysia



Nataly Wanhoff
 Key Account Director
 Diethelm Travel Group



Sam Vincent
 Key Account Director
 Diethelm Travel Group

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Enrich Your Experience

KNOWLEDGE - SUPPORT - INNOVATION

diethelmtravel.com
info@diethelmtravel.com

Diethelm Travel builds on a long history of industry-leading creativity, solid service-delivery and customized travel solutions: for people, by people. Talk to us about Destination Management and how our team and technology supports your business in 12 countries throughout Asia.

“Best Travel Agency, Thailand” – TTG, 2013 Award

“Best Travel Agency, Thailand” – TTG, 2012 Award

“Asia’s Leading Tour Operator” – World Travel Awards, 2012

“Asia’s Leading Travel Agency” – World Travel Awards, 2012