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Malaysia, the strategic business-event destination

Outstanding benefits at the Heart of Asia

"Strategically located in the heart of South East Asia between the booming economies of China and India, Malaysia is blessed with diverse physical, cultural and social attractions. It is this colourful diversity which offers many flexible and value-for-money options which appeal to business events organisers. Excellent modern infrastructure, exotic food choices and numerous cultural attractions have gained Malaysia prominence in Asia as a premier business-tourism destination.

"The Malaysian government is committed to establish the country as a leading business-event destination in the region as business tourism it is a key economic driver in the tourism sector. MyCEB was established to further strengthen Malaysia's business tourism brand in the global arena. As a measure to further develop the international events industry, MyCEB has launched a specialist unit known as the International Events Unit (IEU) which focuses on identifying and supporting international event bids including sports, art and culture and lifestyle events.

"Recognising the potential in the segment and given its high-yield visitor attraction, the government has allocated a funding of RM50 million for the business tourism sector for 2011 and 2012. Malaysia aims to increase business tourism arrivals from 5 percent to 8 percent of the overall tourist arrivals; which translates to an increase from 1.2 million in 2009 to 2.9 million by year 2020, and to position the country as one of the Top 5 destinations in Asia Pacific for international meetings.

"Airline route-planners have solid data to work with in evaluating Malaysia as a business-events destination. In 2010, business tourism arrivals rose to 1.3 million and Malaysia leapt a notable three spots to the 28th position in the International Congress and Convention Association country rankings. Malaysia also retained its position as one of the top 10 meeting destinations in Asia Pacific. The largest meeting held last year was the 18th World Congress of Accountants in Kuala Lumpur which attracted a record attendance of over 6,000 delegates.

"A major factor to be considered by airlines is that of forward-bookings of MICE events, which are a good indicator of short-term and mid-term growth in arrivals. MyCEB with its industry partners has successfully bid for and secured an impressive number of conventions for Malaysia between now until 2016 including

the 7th International Aids Society (IAS) HIV Conference in Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention 2013 (5,000 – 6,000 delegates) and 14th International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) Congress & General Assembly 2014 (3,000 delegates). MyCEB is currently bidding for business events up to year 2020. This represents potential business in the high-yield sector for airlines.

"Working closely with Malaysia Airports' Marketing Division, MyCEB is aware that business events also help fill low season gaps in airline traffic. Part of MyCEB's objective is to spread these events across the year, so that there is an even stream of air-travel throughout the year, with particular emphasis on low seasons. In addition, Malaysia is implementing a steady growth in meetings infrastructure, with carefully-planned new developments to improve meeting facilities even further. These will eventually expand the size of events and grow the business for Malaysia.

"Unlike many countries with just one urban centre or resort area for business events, Malaysia has five major MICE destinations with world-class facilities, backed by award-winning international airports at every location. Apart from various options in and around Kuala Lumpur itself, meeting-planners have more venue choices at spectacular locations throughout the country. Both global and regional Asia Pacific meetings can now rotate to Penang, Kuching, Langkawi and Kota Kinabalu as well as Kuala Lumpur. From historic heritage sites and ultra-modern cities to superb beach resorts and world-famous ecotourism spots, Malaysia offers an unbeatable range of locations for the most memorable MICE events possible.

"Finally, there is the special allure of Malaysia, Truly Asia. In May 2011, Malaysia was ranked by the Global Peace Index as the fourth safest country in the Asia Pacific region behind New Zealand, Japan and Australia, and the 19th safest out of 153 countries in the world. Malaysia is just one of the six non-European nations making the top 20 list. Need further calculations? The Lonely Planet Guide has rated Malaysia as one of the Best Value Destinations 2010, while the Travel & Tourism Index of the World Economic Forum ranked Malaysia as the third most price-competitive country in the world for 2011. And we haven't even begun to talk about the legendary Malaysian hospitality that draws visitors by droves every year! All these factors and more affirm Malaysia as the strategic business-events destination with outstanding benefits at the Heart of Asia!"

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In a crowded and competitive environment, Malaysia stands out as a destination with current and long-term distinctions as a premier destination for meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions. Airline route-planners will benefit from what event-organisers and meeting-planners have already been discovering! Zulkefli Haji Sharif is the CEO of the Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB). A graduate of the University of Bridgeport, Connecticut, USA, he once served as Director at Tourism Malaysia's office in Stockholm Sweden. He says that there are numerous reasons why the sky is the limit for MICE in Malaysia.



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