

SPEECH BY: DATO' SERI DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD
(PRIME MINISTER)

EVENT: THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE ASEAN TRAVEL FORUM 1981

VENUE: GENTING HIGHLANDS

DATE: 20 OCT 1981

TIME:

Yang Berhormat Menteri-Menteri,
Tuan Yang Terutama-Tuan Yang Terutama,
President dan ahli Jawatankuasa Asean
Tourism Association (ASEANTA) dan ASEAN
Hotels and Restaurants Association,
Dif-dif Kehormat,
Tuan-tuan dan Puan-puan sekalian.

SAYA MENGUCAPKAN TERIMA KASIH KEPADA PIHAK PENGANJUR
forum ini kerana menjemput saya ke majlis pada hari ini dan
seterusnya untuk merasmikan pembukaannya. Saya juga ingin
mengambil kesempatan ini untuk mengucapkan selamat datang
kepada para peserta sekalian. Saya berharap tuan-tuan dan
puan-puan, khususnya mereka yang pertama kalinya ke
Malaysia, bukan sahaja akan menghadiri mesyuarat ini tetapi
juga akan mengambil peluang untuk melihat negara ini serta
cara hidup penduduk-penduduknya. Saya berharap tuan-tuan
dan puan-puan akan berasa senang dan gembira semasa berada
di negara ini.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

2. It is indeed a pleasure for me to be here this
afternoon to officiate at the opening of the ASEAN TRAVEL
FORUM 1981. I am happy to meet so many distinguished
members of the tourist industry from both the ASEAN and the
other countries and I wish you all a very warm welcome.

3. Malaysia is happy to host this first ASEAN Travel
Forum. It is my hope that this Forum will place the ASEAN
region firmly on the world tourism map. The delegates
attending the forum will have an opportunity to be
acquainted with and to update themselves on the increasing
tourist attractions and facilities in this region.

4. I would like to congratulate the Tourist Development
Corporation of Malaysia, (TDC), the ASEAN Tourism
Association (ASEANTA), and the ASEAN Hotels and Restaurants
Association (AHRA) for their fine cooperation and
coordination in organising this Forum.

5. This is the first time in the history of tourism in
this region that a travel forum is held exclusively for the
purpose of promoting tourist destinations within the ASEAN
countries. We are encouraged by the presence at this Forum
of so many tour wholesalers from all parts of the world. I

have no doubt that they will find from the deliberations in this Forum that there are many places of tourist interest in the Asean region. Some of these places, however, have not received the attention which they deserved.

Ladies and gentlemen.

6. The coming together of ASEAN countries for the purpose of creating greater business opportunities for those involved in the tourist industry once again demonstrates ASEAN's determination to foster closer cooperation among member countries. We in ASEAN firmly believe in regional cooperation as a means to achieve greater prosperity and stability for our region. It is with this belief that we have nurtured ASEAN.

7. Since its formation, ASEAN has made tangible progress in various fields of cooperation and has also received wide international recognition for its aims and objectives. Looking at our success thus far, I have no doubt that with determination and commitment, we can indeed achieve our aims. This is reflected in the fact that today we see in ASEAN not only cooperation among leaders and officials at governmental level but also among professionals in private sector bodies and groups. The ASEAN Travel Forum which is being organised with the cooperation of both the public and private organisations is an example of this cooperation.

8. The ASEAN region has remained an area of considerable growth and stability. This has enabled ASEAN to concentrate its efforts to bring about greater success in many areas of its activities. It has also enabled ASEAN to cooperate more meaningfully with other countries and regions.

9. Rapid economic development in the ASEAN countries has increased the level of discretionary income, creating a viable market for tourism within the region. Today, more than ever before, there are people in the ASEAN countries who can afford to travel, at least, within the region. The ASEAN countries are rich in scenic attractions. Our diverse cultural heritage should be of interest to our peoples and others outside the region. We have, therefore, great potential for further expansion in our tourist industry. What is required is an attractive packaging and more aggressive marketing of efficiently-run tours. This Forum provides the opportunity for discussion and exchanges of views on this two important subjects and related topics.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. The tourist industry in Malaysia has been growing at an encouraging and steady pace. Today the industry ranks seventh after rubber, petroleum, tin, palm oil, sawn logs and sawn timber. The foreign exchange earnings generated by the tourist industry in Malaysia has almost doubled in the last 10 years from M\$312 million in 1970 to M\$616 million in 1980. In 1980, about 1.5 million tourists visited this

country. Based on current trends, the number of tourists visiting Malaysia is estimated to increase to 2.8 million in 1985.

11. A number of projects under the Government's Fourth Malaysia Development Plan will result in better facilities for people visiting this country. This includes the expansion of existing airports, construction and improvement of the road system and the development of infrastructure. While we develop the country economically we are also giving emphasis to developing and sustaining our national culture and values. This will be reflected in the environment particularly in the architecture, in the arts, and in the way of life of our people. While these are meant to fulfil the aesthetic needs of our own people they would also be an attraction for tourists to this country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. Although tourism is not new to the Asean countries, it is comparatively undeveloped. In this respect, it can be said that our countries can benefit from the experience of other more developed countries. We have the potential to develop a wide variety of attractions within our region and these can indeed be promoted among our own people as well as among international visitors. Let us put our heads together to evolve ways and means to develop the tourist industry in the ASEAN region.

13. With these words, I now have much pleasure in declaring open this first ASEAN Travel Forum.
Thank You.