

SIXTH MEETING OF ASEAN-INDIA TOURISM MINISTERS
26 January 2018, Chiang Mai, Thailand

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

1. The Sixth Meeting of ASEAN and India Tourism Ministers was held on 26 January 2018 in Chiang Mai, Thailand in conjunction with the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2018. The Meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Weerasak Kowsurat, Minister for Tourism and Sports of Thailand, and H.E. Mr. Alphons Joseph Kannanthanam, Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge) and Minister of State for Electronics & Information Technology, Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, India.
2. The Ministers noted the steady growth in tourism exchange between ASEAN and India in 2016 where the preliminary total number of arrivals from India to ASEAN was 3.5 million, an increase of 6.1 per cent as compared to 2015. While on the other hand, influx of ASEAN tourists in 2016 increased by 6.5 per cent compared to 2015 and reached 746,069.
3. The increase of tourism exchange between ASEAN and India has been attributed by enhanced air connectivity between cities in ASEAN and India. In further strengthening this trend, the Ministers supported initiatives undertaken by transport ministers to conclude ASEAN-India Air Transport Agreement and ASEAN-India Maritime Transport Agreement.
4. Recognising the importance of the tourism sector for both ASEAN and India, the Ministers welcomed the progress made in the establishment of the ASEAN-India Centre (AIC), and looked forward to the early conclusion of its MOU. The establishment of AIC would help promote cooperation between ASEAN and India, particularly for tourism and people-to-people exchanges.
5. The Ministers agreed to further enhance ASEAN-India cooperation in tourism under the framework of the 2012 Memorandum of Understanding between ASEAN and India on Strengthening Tourism Cooperation with intensified efforts and activities. The Ministers also welcomed the on-going annual programmes to enhance people-to-people exchanges through organising related events in ASEAN Member States and India. The Ministers welcomed participation by private sectors such as tour operators, airlines, hotel and resort owners, to promote ASEAN-India region at the sidelines of the ASEAN-India Tourism Working Group meeting.
6. The Ministers were pleased to note the progress made in the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding organised in 2016-2017 through the following activities:
 - (i) Sharing best practices for the development of responsible and/or sustainable tourism, particularly in sharing information in the development of ASEAN Sustainable Tourism Assessment Tools (ASITAT);
 - (ii) Workshop on Interpretation for Tourist Guides in World Heritage Sites for ASEAN and South Asia held on 27-31 March 2017 in Ayutthaya and Bangkok;

- (iii) Establishment of the ASEAN-India Crisis Communications Team;
- (iv) Activities of the ASEAN Promotional Chapter for Tourism (APCT) in Mumbai through a networking dinner and the promotion of Visit ASEAN@50 and Southeast Asia as a single cruise destination; and
- (v) India's support of visits from ASEAN Member States' teachers from faculties of hospitality institutes to India.

7. The Ministers expressed their sincere appreciation to the Government and People of the Thailand for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the Meetings.

LIST OF MINISTERS

The Meeting was attended by:

- (i) H.E. Dato Ali Apong, Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism, Brunei Darussalam;
- (ii) H.E. Mr. Tith Chantha, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Cambodia;
- (iii) H.E. Mr. Alphons Joseph Kannanthanam, Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge) and Minister of State for Electronics & Information Technology, Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India;
- (iv) H.E. Dr. Arief Yahya, Minister of Tourism, Indonesia;
- (v) H.E. Prof. Dr. Bosengkham Vongdara, Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Lao PDR;
- (vi) Datuk Rashidi Hasbullah, Secretary-General, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia, representing H.E. Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri bin Abdul Aziz, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia;
- (vii) H.E. U Ohn Maung, Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar;
- (viii) H.E. Benito C. Bengzon, Jr., Undersecretary of Tourism, Philippines;
- (ix) Mr. Lionel Yeo, Chief Executive, Singapore Tourism Board, representing H.E. Mr. S. Iswaran, Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry), Singapore;
- (x) H.E. Mr. Weerasak Kowsurat, Minister for Tourism and Sports, Thailand;
- (xi) H.E. Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Thien, Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Viet Nam; and
- (xii) H.E. Mr. Hirubalan V P, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Political Security Community.
