



Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism
Brunei Darussalam

CONGRATULATORY REMARKS

YANG BERTHORMAT
DATO PADUKA HAJI ALI BIN HAJI APONG
Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism
Brunei Darussalam

AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF
THE REGIONAL SEMINAR ON CONTRIBUTION OF ISLAMIC CULTURE AND ITS
IMPACT ON THE ASIAN TOURISM MARKET

Songket Hall 1, TheRizqun International Hotel, Gadong
Brunei Darussalam

Monday, 16th November 2015

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله رب العالمين، وبه نستعين على أمور الدنيا والدين، والصلاة والسلام على

أشرف الأنبياء والمرسلين، سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين

Deputy Permanent Secretary, Head of Departments;

Distinguished Speakers and Panelists;

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and a very good morning to all of you.

1. First and foremost, I would like to take this opportunity to convey my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Organizing Committee for inviting me as the Guest of Honor for the opening of the inaugural **“Regional Seminar on Contribution of Islamic Culture and Its Impact on Asian Tourism Market”**.
2. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Mr Harry Hwang, Deputy Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and also our distinguished speakers, panelists and participants from overseas - welcome to Brunei Darussalam and *Selamat Datang*.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

3. Today, we are indeed honored to have gathered very distinguished speakers and panelists from different parts of the world to build a knowledge-sharing platform, focusing on the contribution of Islamic Culture and its impact on the Asian tourism market.
4. Culture, by definition, refers to the customs, traditions and civilization of a particular society or group of people. Customs include the way we dress, the way we greet, welcome and serve people. Traditions are the preservation and passing on of those customs from one generation to another. Civilization may refer to the technological advancements that we see, for example in the construction and architecture of our mosques and palaces, old and new. It also refers to the advancement in peoples' behaviours, whether or not they respect laws, the environment, people and others.
5. Then what is Islamic culture? Islamic culture encompasses all of the things I mentioned earlier. The Islamic culture inevitably refers to a culture which complies with the teachings of Islam, mainly sourced from the Al Quran, Al Hadith, the Sunnah of Rasullullah SAW, and the behavior of his companions and the Ulama. Hence Islamic culture means a culture that expects us to respect our guests as they were our brothers and sisters. It teaches us to be warm and inviting, it teaches us to be hospitable and to provide a comfortable and welcoming environment for our guests to stay and want to come back. It teaches modesty and humility in the way we dress, the way we speak and the way we act.
6. If you were travelling to another country, this is what you would expect from the host country. Safety, cleanliness, comfort, reliability, acceptance, respect and friendliness from the moment you arrive at the airport, to the taxis, hotels, tourist attractions until the end of your trip. So, this is also what we should be striving to provide for our guests in

our country. And I believe the Islamic culture and values can fulfill those needs for safety, cleanliness, reliability, acceptance, respect, friendliness and so on.

7. I notice in today's programme that one of the speakers is brother Dato Paduka Ahmad Bukhari bin Pehin Abu Hanifah from the Office of the State Mufti. I hope he will be able to substantiate some of my points here with some quotes from the Quran and from Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) on how to treat our guests.
8. As in any industry, tourism needs products to be offered. But these products need to be polished and packaged nicely before it can be sold. In tourism, this means that the product offerings must be accessible, safe, clean, comfortable, and reliable. Then someone may need to market these to potential visitors. But what is also important, although most easily forgotten is that this is a service industry and requires that personal touch. The welcoming smile and greeting and other personal touch that you offer when your customer enter your restaurant or hotel or any other services, are among important elements in this industry. The warmth and attention your customers receive when they are being served are important. And the gentle way you make customers or guests feel important and appreciated. These are the things that make people want to come back.
9. In Brunei, we already have a lot of product offerings in existence, mainly in ecotourism such as Ulu-Ulu Temburong, Tasek Merimbun and our beaches and diving sites, just to name a few. We also have our cultural heritage attractions such as Kampong Ayer, Royal Regalia and museums. Of course, we have our mosques and palaces, which have always been popular with tourists coming to Brunei.
10. We are still new in Tourism business and, through the MPRT we need to develop more attractive products to offer to tourists as a way to diversify our economic activities. And Insya Allah, with the Islamic culture and values instilled within us, we will be able to

provide the best service we can for our guests and make them feel welcomed, safe and make them want to come back.

11. I hope the Seminar will not only create awareness on the importance of Islamic culture to tourism in terms of product offerings but also the significance of Islamic values, which has the right characteristics that make service delivery very effective.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

12. Before I conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to once again express my gratitude and appreciation to United Nations World Tourism Organization for choosing Brunei Darussalam to be the Host for this Seminar. To our speakers and participants from overseas, please do find time to explore Brunei Darussalam, the Abode of Peace – experience our rich customs and cultural heritage; our local delicacies; the aesthetic value of our beautiful green scenery, and most importantly, the warm Brunei hospitality.

13. I wish you all a successful and fruitful day ahead.

Wabillahi Taufik Wal Hidayah, Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.