

## **APeco 2012**

24 October 2012 – The Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA) is organizing the 7<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Ecotourism Conference (APECO 2012) from 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012. The Penang State Government will play hosts this year taking the reins from Sabah, Kedah, Sarawak, Pahang, Terengganu and Selangor who had organized over the years. APECO 2012 will be held at the Eastin Hotel Penang. The Guest of Honor of APECO 2012 is YAB Tuan Lim Guan Eng, Chief Minister of Penang who will also deliver the Keynote Address “Back To Mother Nature”.

At a Press Conference held at the War Museum, YB Danny Law Heng Kiang, Penang State Exco for Tourism Development & Culture, stated that Penang was pleased to host this prominent Ecotourism Conference for the very first time. YB Danny Law added” We are pleased with the professionalism and expertise of the organizers of the APeco 2012 Conference. MATTA is well known for organizing international travel fairs, trade shows and conferences. We are confident that the APeco 2012 Conference & Exhibition would provide the much needed expertise and guidance to the many ecotourism players in Penang so that Penang will have one of the most sustainable ecotourism facilities and products in Malaysia in years to come.”

APECO conference is a prominent ecotourism event in the Asia Pacific where ecotourism academicians and practitioners from the Asia Pacific region congregate to network and exchange views on ecotourism, conservation, garden heritage, coastal forests, community based projects and challenges of ecotourism.

A total of 10 papers will be presented by 11 expert speakers & panelists from the following countries:-

1. Malaysia
2. Thailand
3. Singapore
4. South Africa
5. Indonesia
6. India

They would be covering various aspects of the Garden Heritage, Coastal Forests and Challenges of Ecotourism which will provide the delegates an opportunity to learn about

- i) Ecotourism opportunities in the Asia Pacific region.
- ii) Challenges in marketing ecotourism products and services
- iii) Development of ecotourism products
- iv) Ecotourism developments and trends in the Asia Pacific region
- v) Marketing Asia Pacific’s Ecotourism Attractions
- vi) Designing, building and maintaining ecotourism facilities,
- vii) Challenges in running a community based ecotourism project

“MATTA Members started the Conference as there was growing awareness of the need of conservation and sustainable development particularly in East Malaysia. The response was encouraging attracting about close to 300 participants from the Asia Pacific region. APECO 2012 will provide an opportunity for some of the ecotourism sectors to showcase their products during the **APeco 2012 Conference** as this year

there will be a small exhibition space as well during the Conference” said Ybhg Dato Mohd Khalid Harun, President of MATTA.

“Besides learning of the challenges and opportunities of ecotourism, we hope that the Conference Sessions on the management of Coastal Forests, Garden Heritage and Challenges of Ecotourism will help the Malaysian authorities, developers and tour operators to have a better insight of some of the best-practices in the region” said En. Johari Shafie, the MATTA Penang Chapter Chairman who is also the developer and promoter of the War Museum site.

MATTA hopes that the strategic move to have a “Conference in the Pearl of the Orient” helps to promote Penang as an ecotourism destination despite its ongoing development and modernization.

The theme selected for APECO 2012 is “**BACK TO MOTHER NATURE**” “The speakers & panelists will share the stage during the conference proper whilst having dialogue sessions during the field trips to one of the many Eco Tourism sites in Penang, among which is the Tropical Fruit Farm” , said Mr. Quah Ewe Kheng, Organizing Chairman of **APeco 2012**. Delegates will have the opportunity to visit the Meromictic Lake, one of only two in the whole world, besides other Eco Tourism sites, culminating with the Closing Dinner at Penang Hill, with the Guest of Honor YB Dato’ Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen.

“Our partners in ecotourism, the Malaysian Nature Society are promoting the Conference to over 2500 of their members nationwide and over 2800 of MATTA members are already aware of the forthcoming Conference,” added Dato Khalid Harun.

Some of the respected renowned ecotourism personalities who will be sharing their knowledge and experiences are Prof Dr. Amran Hamzah of University Technology Malaysia, Ms Chitra Gurnani Daga, Co-Founder of Thriophilia Adventure Tours, a leading Eco Tourism tour operator from India, Mr. Peter Myles, Tourism Specialist from South Africa, two of Malaysia’s leading authority in ecotourism Mr Albert Teo of Borneo Eco Tours and Mr. Mohamed Shah Redza, Executive Director of Malaysian Nature Society.

The sponsors of this international event are the Penang State Government, Ministry of Tourism, Tourism Malaysia, Oman Air, Eastin Hotel, Vistana Hotel, Jerejak Rainforest Resort.

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For further information on **APECO 2012**, please contact:

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From left: Fauzi Dali, RTM, Ann Tan, MATTA, Kathleen Leong, Oman Air, Lynn Yong, Sales Account Manager of Vistana Hotel, Normah Ahmad, Executive Assistant Manager of Jerejek Rainforest Resort, Dato' Mohd Khalid Harun, President of MATTA, YB Danny Law, Penang State EXCO for Tourist Development and Culture, Mary Ann Harris, General Manager of Eastin Hotel Penang, En. Johari Shafie, MATTA Penang Chapter Chairman and Mr. Quah Ewe Kheng, Organizing Chairman of APeco 2012