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ROYAL BELUM INTELLECTUAL DISCOURSE

***'POSITIONING ROYAL BELUM AS A WORLD CLASS TOURISM &
RESEARCH DESTINATION'***

13 OCTOBER 2014, MONDAY
SYUEN HOTEL, IPOH, PERAK

YAB DATO' SERI DIRAJA DR. ZAMBRY ABD. KADIR

Chief Minister of Perak Darul Ridzuan

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Chairman of Sabah Park / Member of Tourism Board of Directors

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Executive Councillor for Tourism and Culture, Perak

Y.BRS. TUAN HAJI MOHD ODZMAN ABDUL KADIR

Organising Chairman and President of the Perak Tourism Association

Participants of the Royal Belum Intellectual Discourse,
Tourism trade fraternity,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen.

Good morning and Salam Sejahtera.

1. I am pleased to be a part of this important and meaningful discourse today. I would like to thank **Dato' Nolee and Perak Tourism Association** for extending an invitation to me, and for honouring me by offering the **opportunity to deliver this keynote address.**
2. I have spent the last weekend in Perak and realise that **many things are happening here – Pangkor – Taiping – Kampung Dew – Ipoh – Belum Photography Contest, video production and song contest.**
3. To put together an event of this magnitude is certainly not easy. Before I go any further, I would like to congratulate the organiser, the **Perak State Government**, who has collaborated with the **Perak Tourism Association**, the **Ministry of Tourism and Culture** and the **Pulau Banding Foundation** to make this forum possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

4. I feel guilty for being here today. For those of you who don't realise, I am actually a local Perak boy. I have been promoting various destinations in the country all these years, yet I feel that I have not done enough for my own home state. As a matter of fact, tourism in Perak is set for its **rapid growth, i.e. catching up with the more popular destinations.**
5. However, being a latecomer has its advantage too. **Perak can learn from other states in promoting its tourism.** For instance, in terms of ecotourism, Perak can look at what Pahang, Sabah and Sarawak have done and follow in the footsteps of their success.
6. We are privileged to have Yang Mulia Dato' Seri Tengku Adlin here today. He knows ecotourism like the back of his hand. If you want to learn, you must learn from the best. I believe all of you will gain much from his talk on 'The Sabah Experience' later.
7. Despite being a latecomer and minor player, I must say that **Perak has it all.** The state houses some of the major attractions in the country such as **historical sites, islands and beaches, theme parks, nature reserves, rainforests, wetlands and hill stations. Royal Belum is one such example – it combines the best of all natural attractions.**
8. In brief, Perak has all it takes to be a major tourist destination in Malaysia. It is obvious now that the state's tourism has just **accelerated with all these fascinating attractions and a new resolve with its young and able team.**
9. After all, there is no excuse for it to fail now. We have all the right people driving the state's tourism further. I am confident that Dato' Nolee, who is succeeding her father's role as a Tourism Exco, will bring Perak's tourism to greater heights. For that matter, Dato' Seri DiRaja Dr. Zambry too grew up in a place where tourism has been its main economic activity.
10. We also have Tuan Haji Mohd Odzman, who has spearheaded this forum. I trust that we can expect many more exciting tourism programmes from him in the future.
11. And last but not least, Perak tourism will also receive the full support of the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, who is **inclined towards promoting Malaysia's natural attributes and is himself very familiar with the state and a well-travelled man.**
12. Like I said, there is just no excuse for Perak tourism not to grow and be a popular destination for both local and international tourists.

Ladies and gentlemen,

13. With 4,675 km of coastline (Peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak combined) and numerous islands dotting its waters, Malaysia is a coastal country. We are traditionally famous for having many beautiful beaches and islands. In fact, three of our beaches have been listed in **CNN's World's 100 best beaches**.
14. Unfortunately, in this category, we have to compete with countries in the Pacific region, which also offer equally beautiful, if not better beaches and islands.
15. However, when it comes to nature and ecotourism attractions, we can claim to have the upper hand. Take for instance, the Royal Belum. This **130 million-year-old rainforest is a natural treasure, and is, in fact, even older than the Amazon and Congo rainforests**.
16. We are also able to provide **excellent infrastructure**, which enable travellers to access our ecotourism attractions quickly, safely, conveniently, and economically. Most of our rainforests, caves, and national parks can also be explored by travellers on a day trip.
17. Another advantage that Malaysia has is the **diversity of its tourism attractions**. Tourists who are here for an ecotourism tour can combine it with other attractions such as shopping, city tour, food trail, homestay, cultural heritage and many more.
18. In addition, **accessibility to most of our tourist spots is also easy** as the country offers excellent transportation system. Tourists are able to fly to any domestic destination, within an hour, with the exception of Sabah and Sarawak. They can even fly straight to Redang or Pangkor Islands.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

19. The organising of this **Royal Belum Intellectual Discourse** is certainly appropriate and timely. Belum has huge potential and we aim to **position it as a world-class tourism and research destination**.
20. I understand that this is one of the many initiatives and efforts carried out by the Perak Government to elevate the state's tourism industry. Being a gem and a star attraction in Perak, naturally, Royal Belum deserves special emphasis and promotional effort.
21. Perak is fortunate to have many private and governmental bodies working together to promote the state's tourism including tourism associations, city council, local authorities, and governmental bodies such as the **Perak Tourism Association**, the **Perak Government**, the **Ministry of Tourism and Culture** and the **Pulau Banding Foundation**.

22. We should also thank **EMKAY Group** for everything that they have done to promote the Royal Belum. Their carefully planned resort that incorporates eco-friendly materials and practices and aggressive marketing efforts have helped boost awareness of this natural wonder. They have also done well in their programme to adopt the local ethnic community in its activities.
23. Throughout these two days, you will be involved in discussions and deliberations to **promote and market Royal Belum effectively**. In addition, we also want to make this ecotourism destination **a centre for research**. With over 130 million years of age and the Royal Belum State Park encompassing over 100,000 hectares, imagine the amount of potential research that can be carried out in Royal Belum.
24. I would like to take this opportunity to remind all tourism players and stakeholders that **we should not disturb the environment** in the name of tourism development. The current form of environmentally exploitive tourism has caused huge environmental and ecological problems in many countries, including Malaysia.
25. A dense and lush tropical rainforest can just vanish within a few years if tourist projects are developed without the required ecological and environmental control and safeguards in place.
26. Tourists do not travel so far and pay thousands of dollars to see stumps of dead trees, rotting garbage, polluted streams, or degraded and dangerous environments. They are paying for natural beauty. They want to see lush rainforests, clean and clear rivers, plants and vegetation flourishing, and wild animals roaming in their natural habitat.
27. Tourism can generate immense income for us if we develop projects that could maintain this kind of environmental balance.
28. I will leave it to the experts to tell you more. By the end of tomorrow, I believe all of you will have a better understanding of how to make Royal Belum a world-renowned tourism destination.

Ladies and gentlemen,

29. Developing Royal Belum is in line with one of the 12 initiatives of the Tourism NKEA, or National Key Economic Area, to enhance our tourism yields. The fourth Entry Point Project (EPP) aims to establish Malaysia as a global biodiversity hub.
30. **Tourism Malaysia has also been playing our part in promoting Royal Belum**. For instance, at this year's **ITB Berlin**, Europe's largest and most prominent tourism fair, we unveiled Royal Belum Rainforest as Malaysia's best-kept ecotourism secret.

31. To complement Tourism Malaysia's promotions of the Royal Belum, a new series of ecotourism television commercials have gone on air in Europe. This publicity was a build-up to the global release of "**Eco Malaysia**", a special **National Geographic documentary** on the Royal Belum Rainforest and ecotourism hosted by renowned British naturalist, Nick Baker.
32. We will be doing another similar promotion soon with **Discovery Channel** to promote tourist attractions in Perak, including the Royal Belum.

Ladies and gentlemen,

33. This discourse is only the beginning of the new initiatives of Perak's tourism industry. The state has so much potential, waiting to be discovered and explored. As tourism industry players, Perak is relying on all of you to explore new options, package them creatively and sell.
34. This discourse is also timely as we are ushering in the **Year of Festivals 2015**, which is a continuation of **Visit Malaysia Year 2014**. We should take advantage of this celebration and create more tourism products to ensure we meet the targets set for these two major tourism campaigns.
35. The **MH370 and MH17** tragedies this year have tested the resilience of our tourism industry. As industry players, we need to work harder now to regain the confidence of the international traveling public.
36. I'm pleased to inform that the period between **January and July 2014** recorded 16.1 million tourist arrivals, a 9.7% increase over the same period in 2013. Our ultimate goal, under the **Malaysian Tourism Transformation Plan (MTTP)**, is to achieve **36 million tourist arrivals** and **RM168 billion in tourist receipts** by 2020.
37. It's an ambitious goal no doubt; but I believe we are on the right track. We just need to work together closely. Our country still has a lot of untapped potential. It's relying on us to bring out the best. With your cooperation, we will be able make Malaysia a top tourist destination in the region.
38. With that, I wish you all fruitful deliberations and I hope this discourse will achieve its objective of making Royal Belum a world-class tourism and research destination.

Thank you.