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SABAH WELCOMES VISITORS WITH A HEARTY HARVEST CELEBRATION FOR KAAMATAN FESTIVAL

KOTA KINABALU, 30 May 2025 – In conjunction with the celebration of Sabah's iconic Kaamatan Festival and the Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026) campaign, Tourism Malaysia Sabah hosted a special welcoming event at Kota Kinabalu International Airport (KKIA) to greet arriving visitors with an engaging showcase of local culture and tradition.

Throughout the day, 27 flights arrived during the event period, bringing visitors from Seoul, Taipei, Singapore, Shenzhen, Hong Kong, and destinations across Malaysia. These included an estimated 930 international and 4,933 domestic travellers, all of whom were welcomed with festive cheer and cultural experiences upon arrival.

Guests were treated to a rich cultural experience featuring Magunatip (bamboo dance) and traditional KadazanDusun performances, along with a sampling of local traditional delicacies, including *tapai* (fermented glutinous rice). The event was ceremoniously launched with the resonating beat of a traditional gong by YB Dato Sri Tiong King Sing, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, accompanied by a symbolic winnowing of rice by distinguished guests together with *Kulintangan* music instrument traditional performance as a tribute to the spirit of the Kaamatan Festival.

Also in attendance were Ms. Haryanty Abu Bakar, Director of Tourism Malaysia Sabah; Mr. Jefry Ramli, Senior Airport Manager of KKIA; Mr. Bobby Alex @ William, Marketing Manager of Sabah Tourism Board; Mr. Alex Chong, Deputy Chairman of MATTA Sabah Chapter; Mr. Vincent Sia, Chairman of Malaysia Chinese Tourism Association (MCTA) Sabah Chapter; Ms. Melanie Chu, Chairman of Sabah Tourist Association (STA); and representatives from respective airlines.

The Kaamatan Festival celebrated annually in May, honours the rice spirit “Bambaazon” and is a time of thanksgiving, unity, and cultural pride among Sabah’s indigenous communities. This initiative aligns with Tourism Malaysia’s goals to boost cultural tourism and elevate visitor experiences in gearing up for VM2026.

Malaysia's tourism sector continues to score a strong recovery and growth. In 2024, Malaysia welcomed 38 million international visitors - a 31.1% increase from 2023 and 8.3% above pre-pandemic 2019 levels. Visitor receipts also surged, generating RM106.78 billion, reflecting a substantial 43.7% growth over 2023 and exceeding 2019 figures by 20%.

This positive trend has continued into early 2025, with the first four months recording 13.4 million visitor arrivals, a 21.0% year-on-year increase. The top ten visitor-generating markets from January to April were Singapore, Indonesia, China, Thailand, India, Brunei, South Korea, Philippines, Australia and the United Kingdom.

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About Tourism Malaysia

Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, also known as Tourism Malaysia, is an agency under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture Malaysia. It focuses on the specific task of promoting Malaysia as a preferred tourism destination. Since its inception, it has emerged as a major player in the international tourism scene.

The next Visit Malaysia Year, set to take place in 2026, will commemorate the sustainability of the nation's tourism industry, which is also in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG).

Furthermore, Tourism Malaysia actively endorses the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT), working towards the realisation of the IMT-GT Visiting Year 2023-2025, with the shared aim of promoting the region as a unified tourism destination. For more information, visit Tourism Malaysia's social media accounts on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), [YouTube](#), and [TikTok](#).

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