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PRESS RELEASE

MF-ASK 2026 ADVANCES MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TOURISM THROUGH STANDARDS, TRUST AND BETTER EXPERIENCES

KUANTAN, PAHANG, 4 NOV 2026: The Muslim-Friendly Assurance Symposium & Knowledge (MF-ASK) 2026 brought together more than 300 academics, researchers, students and industry stakeholders, including 36 international participants from five countries, to strengthen research, knowledge exchange and industry collaboration in advancing Malaysia's Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality (MFTH) ecosystem.

Held at Zenith Hotel Kuantan, Pahang, the symposium was organised by the Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) in collaboration with UCYP University and the Islamic Development Management Research Centre (ISDEV), under the theme “From Standards to Trust, From Assurance to Experience”. In addition, the symposium was also supported by Universiti Malaysia Pahang Sultan Abdullah (UMPSA) and ASEAN Academic Association (ASEANACA), with strategic partnership of MITRA Kembara Travel and Zenith Hotel Kuantan.

The symposium provided a platform for academics, researchers and industry practitioners to exchange perspectives on strengthening standards and assurance mechanisms, building greater confidence in Muslim-friendly tourism services, and translating these efforts into meaningful experiences for travellers.

Through keynote addresses and academic presentations, MF-ASK 2026 explored various dimensions of Muslim-friendly tourism, covering industry development, policy, governance, hospitality, technology, sustainability and international collaboration.

The keynote sessions featured perspectives on the future of halal tourism research, Shariah-compliant hotel development, waqf tourism, Muslim-friendly tourism development in Vietnam and the economic value of Muslim-friendly tourism in Southeast Asia.

Academic presentations were organised around three broad areas: Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality concepts; technology, digitalisation and innovation; and destinations, heritage and community.

Discussions examined how Muslim-friendly tourism can be further strengthened through research and policy development, while exploring the potential of artificial intelligence, digital platforms, Islamic heritage and community-based tourism in shaping future traveller experiences.

Mohammad Faisal bin Abu Suaib Khan, Director-General of ITC, said: "*Research must go beyond the academic sphere. Its true value lies in how it informs policy, strengthens industry practices and contributes to better experiences for travellers.*

"At ITC, we recognise that the sustainable development of Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality must be underpinned by credible research, evidence-based policymaking and strong collaboration between academia, government and industry."

Over the years, ITC has undertaken research to better understand the readiness, opportunities and challenges within Malaysia's Islamic tourism ecosystem. Among these were the Study on the Readiness of Malaysian Accommodation Towards Shariah-Compliance under the 10th Malaysia Plan, which recommended the use of the term Muslim-Friendly Accommodation, and the Profiling of Mosques with Tourism-Related Attractions within the Tourism Corridors in Malaysia under the 11th Malaysia Plan.

Both studies reflect the importance of research in identifying industry needs, developing practical approaches and supporting the wider growth of Muslim-friendly tourism.

As part of its continued commitment to strengthening the research ecosystem, ITC also supports the Islamic Tourism Research Grant (ITRG), which provides funding to researchers from Malaysian higher education institutions undertaking or supervising research in Islamic tourism and Muslim-friendly tourism.

ITC is also exploring proposed initiatives to improve access to research and strengthen its practical application, including a Journal Repository on Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality (MFTH), envisioned as a centralised online knowledge hub for academic journals, research papers, conference proceedings and related publications.

Another proposed initiative, Muslim-Friendly Insights, focuses on policy research and analysis to identify policy gaps, implementation challenges and opportunities for improvement, while providing policymakers and relevant government agencies with evidence-based insights and practical recommendations.

The symposium is expected to further strengthen collaboration between academic institutions, researchers, policymakers and industry stakeholders, ensuring that knowledge generated through research can be translated into practical initiatives and meaningful contributions to the tourism sector.

MF-ASK 2026 was held as part of the wider programme of the 5th World Islamic Tourism Conference (WITC) 2026, organised by ITC from 4 to 8 November in Kuantan, Pahang. It was officiated by YBhg. Dato' Sri Hajah Shahaniza Shamsuddin, Chairman of the Board of Directors, KYP Education Sdn. Bhd.

The symposium reinforces ITC's commitment to advancing Muslim-friendly tourism through research, industry development, capacity building, recognition initiatives and collaboration with tourism stakeholders, while supporting Malaysia's position as a leading destination for Muslim-friendly travel.

Media Kit

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About Islamic Tourism Centre

Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC) is an entity under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Malaysia, tasked to develop the Islamic Tourism segment for Malaysia. It advocates for Muslim-friendly tourism and hospitality (MFTH) by offering research and market intelligence, training, industry development consultation, services standards and recognition, and information exchange.

For further details, kindly email **comms@itc.gov.my** or the following individuals:
Anis Ramli, Corporate Communications Unit, ITC at 012 321 9137
Siti Rahmah Lehan, Corporate Communications Unit, ITC at 012 9070 993
Nurin Sufia Muazamir, Corporate Communications Unit, ITC at 019 8013 400
Aliya Syazwani, Corporate Communications Unit, ITC at 014 236 0038