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FROM LANGKAWI TO GUIYANG: MALAYSIA STRENGTHENS ITS ROLE IN A MORE CONNECTED CHINA-ASEAN PARTNERSHIP

PUTRAJAYA, 18 AUGUST 2026 - Malaysia strengthened its engagement with China across tourism and education through two recent regional events in Langkawi and Guiyang, with tourism partnerships focusing on Muslim-friendly travel and business cooperation, while education discussions highlighted growing collaboration in AI, digital learning and skills development.

The two engagements took place within days of each other, beginning with the **ASEAN-China Tourism Dialogue**, hosted by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) in Langkawi on July 22 and 23, followed by the **2026 China-ASEAN Education Cooperation Week (CAECW)** in Guiyang, Guizhou, from July 28 to Aug 2.

The ASEAN-China Tourism Dialogue brought together senior government officials, tourism organisations, industry leaders and private-sector representatives from ASEAN and China. Discussions covered sustainable tourism, digital transformation, regional connectivity and people-to-people exchanges.

The dialogue was officially opened by Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, together with Chinese Ambassador to Malaysia Ouyang Yujing, World Tourism Alliance chair Zhang Xu and ASEAN-China Centre secretary-general Zhang Lizhong.

The programme also included panel discussions on tourism resilience, digital innovation and cultural and creative tourism, while the ASEAN-China Business Networking Session gave tourism businesses from both regions an opportunity to establish new contacts and explore potential partnerships.

PRESS RELEASE

Held alongside the regional dialogue, the **Malaysia-China Tourism Dialogue** provided a more focused platform for Malaysian and Chinese tourism stakeholders to discuss bilateral cooperation, tourism promotion and business opportunities.

Several memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and business cooperation agreements were signed and exchanged during the Malaysia-China session.

ITC STRENGTHENS MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TOURISM COOPERATION

Among the partnerships established in Langkawi was a strategic cooperation agreement between the **Islamic Tourism Centre (ITC)** and **China International Travel Services (CITS)** to cross-promote Muslim-friendly tourism products and destinations in Malaysia and China.

The partnership provided an avenue for both organisations to explore joint promotional opportunities and improve awareness of Muslim-friendly tourism offerings in both markets.

For ITC, the agreement also created an opportunity to share Malaysia's experience in developing its Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality ecosystem with Chinese tourism stakeholders.

ITC has developed programmes covering industry standards, training, capacity building and service recognition, including the **Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality Assurance and Recognition (MFAR)** programme.

ITC's approach has been to make tourism more accessible and comfortable for Muslim travellers, who have specific faith requirements to fulfil even while travelling, without excluding the needs of conventional travellers.

PRESS RELEASE

ITC also signed a memorandum of understanding with **Dorsett Hospitality International** to expand the MFAR programme to its international properties in Chengdu, Shanghai and Wuhan.

The cooperation will allow ITC to share its hospitality standards and capacity-building experience with participating properties, with the aim of helping them better understand the needs of Muslim travellers.

ITC also entered into a strategic collaboration with **Oriental Zhen Shang (Beijing) Cultural Media Co., Ltd** and **Xi'an You Shen Creative Marketing Planning Co., Ltd** to support awareness and training on Malaysia's Muslim-friendly tourism offering and explore opportunities to develop a Muslim-friendly tourism ecosystem in China.

FOOD, CULTURE AND TOURISM

Another area discussed during the Langkawi programme was halal Chinese gastronomy.

Through collaboration with **Mohd Chan Signatures Sdn Bhd** and the **Malaysian Inbound Chinese Association (MICA)**, ITC supported efforts to promote halal Chinese food as part of Malaysia's tourism offering.

The initiative brought together food, culture and tourism, while offering Chinese Muslim travellers an opportunity to enjoy familiar Chinese flavours in a halal setting.

Malaysia was also recognised as the **Top Muslim-Friendly Destination among OIC countries in the Mastercard-CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index 2026**, marking its 11th consecutive year at the top of the ranking.

PRESS RELEASE

The recognition reflected the development of Malaysia's wider Muslim-Friendly Tourism and Hospitality ecosystem, involving government, tourism businesses and other industry partners.

FROM TOURISM TO EDUCATION

The discussions in Langkawi were followed a few days later by the **2026 China-ASEAN Education Cooperation Week (CAECW)** in Guiyang.

CAECW had been held since 2008 and had attracted more than 54,000 participants from nearly 90 countries and regions comprising education officials, university leaders and experts from China and ASEAN. The 2026 programme continued its focus on education cooperation while placing greater attention on artificial intelligence, digital education and skills development.

CONTINUING THE ENGAGEMENT

The Langkawi and Guiyang events had different focuses, but both reflected Malaysia's continued engagement with China and ASEAN through tourism, education, business and people-to-people exchanges.

For ITC, the Langkawi dialogue provided an opportunity to meet Chinese tourism stakeholders and develop specific partnerships around Muslim-friendly tourism and hospitality.

ITC will continue working with its Chinese partners on the initiatives established in Langkawi, including cooperation in tourism promotion, hospitality standards, training and the development of Muslim-friendly tourism offerings.

The recent engagements also provided opportunities for Malaysia to share its experience while learning from developments taking place in China and other ASEAN countries.

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ITC Digital Press Kit - ITC'S Role in China-ASEAN Partnership

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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.

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