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PRESS RELEASE
MINISTRY OF TOURISM, ARTS AND CULTURE

**MALAYSIA STRENGTHENS ASEAN CULTURAL COOPERATION
THROUGH THE 21ST SOMCA AND RELATED MEETINGS IN SABAH**

SABAH, 19 NOVEMBER 2025 | Malaysia continues to strengthen its leadership in the ASEAN cultural landscape as the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) hosts the 21st Senior Officials' Meeting on Culture and Arts (SOMCA) and related meetings from 17th to 22nd November 2025 in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

The series of meetings is officiated by YB Datuk Khairul Firdaus Akbar Khan, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia and is attended by senior officials from all ASEAN Member States as well as representatives from the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. The high-level discussions reinforce ASEAN's collective commitment to advancing regional cooperation in culture, arts and the creative economy as key drivers of identity, innovation and sustainable development.

In his welcoming remarks, YB Datuk Khairul Firdaus highlights Malaysia's pride in the successful adoption of two key deliverables, namely the ASEAN Creative Economy (ACE) Sustainability Framework and the Melaka Declaration on Cultural Heritage Value Creation and extends appreciation to all Member States for supporting their realisation. He further emphasises that collaboration with ASEAN's dialogue partners under the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) framework remains a cornerstone of regional cultural diplomacy.

Adding depth to the programme, delegates also convene for the 7th Working Committee Meeting for ASEAN–ROK Cultural Heritage Cooperation (AKCHC), which focuses on strengthening joint efforts in cultural heritage preservation, capacity-building and creative collaboration between ASEAN and the Republic of Korea.

As part of the cultural immersion agenda, participants experience Sabah's vibrant cultural and natural heritage through visits to the Mari Mari Cultural Village, which offers a living showcase of indigenous traditions, crafts and lifestyles, as well as the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park.

The series of meetings draws strong regional and media attention, reflecting Malaysia's active role in promoting cultural diplomacy and heritage cooperation within ASEAN and beyond. The outcomes achieved serve as a foundation for continued collaboration towards a sustainable, inclusive and resilient cultural ecosystem in the region.

In conjunction with Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026), Malaysia remains steadfast in positioning culture and arts as integral pillars of sustainable tourism and creative economy growth, in line with the principles of Malaysia MADANI, which emphasise inclusivity, sustainability and shared prosperity. Through ASEAN cooperation and cultural exchange, MOTAC continues to showcase Malaysia's diverse cultural heritage, artistic excellence and warm hospitality to the world, reflecting the nation's aspirations towards a progressive, harmonious and innovative society.

The Borneo Arts and Crafts Bazaar is held in conjunction with the 21st SOMCA to highlight the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Sabah and the wider Borneo region. Featuring traditional handicrafts, textiles, artworks and locally produced creative items, the bazaar provides delegates and the public with an opportunity to experience and appreciate the craftsmanship and cultural expressions of local artisans. The bazaar takes place from 18 to 20 November 2025, between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., at the Magellan Sutera Resort, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

For more information on ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) programme and events during Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship, please refer to <https://ascc2025.motac.gov.my/>

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