

PRESS RELEASE

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TOURISM MALAYSIA PARTNERS WITH BRAINCHILD PICTURES FOR "ITAM: A SUN BEAR STORY" DOCUMENTARY PREMIERE

KUALA LUMPUR – Tourism Malaysia and Brainchild Pictures are proud to announce the Malaysian premiere of "ITAM: A Sun Bear Story", the nation's first feature-length documentary on Sun Bear, ahead of its nationwide theatrical release on 23 July 2026.

Produced by Brainchild Pictures, "ITAM: A Sun Bear Story" marks a significant milestone as the first Malaysian feature documentary to be released simultaneously in Bahasa Malaysia, English, and Mandarin. To ensure consistency and a unified emotional depth, all three versions are narrated by the renowned TV personality and host, Mr Baki Zainal, making the film highly accessible to audiences from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

As one of the most biodiverse nations in the world, Malaysia is home to the Malayan Sun Bear, which is the smallest bear species globally and a significant symbol of the rich natural heritage of the country. The species has also been selected as a key icon for the Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026) campaign through its official mascots, Wira and Manja, perfectly reflecting Malaysia's identity as a vibrant, welcoming, and environmentally conscious destination.

Filmed across the spectacular pristine rainforests of Sabah, the documentary follows the inspiring journey of Itam, a rescued sun bear, from her initial rehabilitation at the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre (BSBCC) to her eventual return to the wild. Through stunning cinematography and heartfelt storytelling, the documentary offers audiences a rare glimpse into one of the world's least-studied bear species and the dedicated conservation efforts that give these animals a second chance at life.

The film prominently showcases some of Malaysia's most remarkable natural landscapes and eco-tourism sites, including the BSBCC in Sepilok and the Tabin Wildlife Reserve. Highlighting these locations reinforces Sabah's position as one of the world's premier destinations for wildlife conservation and nature-based tourism.

The nationwide theatrical release follows a series of exclusive gala premieres held across Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Johor Bahru, and Kota Kinabalu. These events bring together government leaders, conservationists, filmmakers, tourism stakeholders, educators, and members of the public to celebrate a landmark achievement for both Malaysian cinema and wildlife conservation.



Beyond its entertainment value, "ITAM: A Sun Bear Story" aims to inspire greater public appreciation for biodiversity, environmental stewardship, and responsible tourism practices. The film effectively demonstrates how compelling storytelling can foster deeper connections between people and nature while encouraging active support for conservation efforts that safeguard Malaysia's unique wildlife.

Tourism Malaysia continues to welcome strategic initiatives that showcase the nation's diverse tourism offerings through meaningful stories and shared experiences. In line with VM2026 campaign, "ITAM: A Sun Bear Story" is set to further strengthen Malaysia's global reputation as a premium destination where visitors can experience not only breathtaking landscapes and a rich cultural heritage, but also globally significant conservation work.

This strategic promotional push aligns seamlessly with the exceptional upward trajectory of the national tourism sector. Throughout 2025, Malaysia recorded 42.2 million international visitor arrivals, representing an increase of 11.2 per cent compared to the 38.0 million arrivals captured in 2024. This robust growth has successfully extended into the current year, with Malaysia recording 17.5 million visitor arrivals from January until May 2026, marking a 3.4 per cent growth compared to the 16.9 million arrivals recorded during the corresponding period last year.

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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 and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC). It focuses on promoting Malaysia as a preferred tourism destination and has, since its establishment, played a significant role in strengthening the country's presence and competitiveness in the global tourism landscape.

Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026) underscores Malaysia's commitment to sustainable tourism development, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). The campaign aims to showcase the nation's diverse natural attractions, rich cultural heritage, and vibrant tourism offerings, while driving inclusive growth and long-term value for local communities and industry stakeholders.

For more information, visit Tourism Malaysia's website www.tourism.gov.my and social media accounts on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), [YouTube](#), and [TikTok](#).

About Brainchild Pictures

Brainchild Pictures is an independent film production company dedicated to creating authentic Asian stories with international appeal. Its award-winning productions have been recognised at film festivals worldwide and continue to inspire audiences through meaningful and impactful storytelling.

About ITAM: A Sun Bear Story

ITAM: A Sun Bear Story is Malaysia's first feature-length wildlife documentary. Filmed over several years in Sabah, the documentary chronicles the remarkable journey of Itam, a rescued sun bear, from rehabilitation to her return to the rainforest. Through breathtaking visuals and compelling



storytelling, the film highlights the resilience of wildlife, the dedication of conservationists and the vital role sun bears play in maintaining healthy tropical rainforest ecosystems.

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