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Arabian Travel Market

Philippines recognised for efforts after 2012 typhoon

Theodore Koumelis - 09 May 2013, 10:56

Arabian Travel Market New Frontiers Award honours the tenacious spirit of its people and nationwide commitment to rebuilding the economy in the south of the country.



Benito C. Ben

Carlos Sala

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Arabian Travel Market (ATM), the Middle East's premier travel and tourism exhibition, has named the Philippines as the recipient of the New Frontiers Award 2013 during a special seminar event held on the second day of the show.

Mr. **Benito C. Bengzon, Jr.**, Assistant Secretary, International Tourism Promotions, Department of Tourism Middle East office - Philippines, accepted the award on behalf of the country's Department of Tourism from **Mark Walsh**, Portfolio Director, Reed Travel Exhibitions, with previous recipients, Japan and Chile, represented respectively by **Daisuke Matsunaga**, Consul General of Japan, and **Carlos Salas**, the Chilean Trade Commissioner.

"The Philippines, its government and its people, have shown remarkable fortitude and a stoic determination to get both communities and the local economy back on track following the devastation wreaked by Typhoon Bopha late last year, and their resilience in the face of such a monumental crisis is commendable," said Walsh.

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The award was made in recognition of the Philippines' ongoing efforts to rebuild physical infrastructure and its tourism economy in the wake of the December 2012 typhoon, which affected 6.2 million people in the south of the country leaving close to one million displaced persons.

Accepting the award, Benito C Bengzon Jr, said: *"The Philippine government, under the administration of President Aquino, and the Department of Tourism have worked hand-in-hand to establish tourism as a major generator of income for the people and the country. At times of adversity, such as this, the determined spirit of our countrymen, supported by assistance from the international community, shines through and, it is this same spirit that is driving our tourism industry forward."*

Typhoon Bopha was the deadliest in the world in 2012, damaging more than 216,000 houses and leveling large tracts of land including key public infrastructure and agricultural communities.

The subsequent development of the Typhoon Bopha Action Plan for Recovery requested US\$65 million to provide immediate life-saving aid and support to the most-affected communities, with a total of US\$76 million required to administer 46 projects through to the end of H1 2013 in order to fast track economic regeneration.

According to the latest figures released by the country's Department of Tourism, tourist traffic to the Philippines from the Middle East is showing steady growth with visitor arrivals for the first three months of the year showing a 22.1% growth against the same period last year.

Reed Exhibitions has also announced that it will commence daily direct flights to Clark International Airport located in the north of the country on 1st October 2013, the second Philippines destination for the airline. Cebu Pacific will also begin daily non-stop flights from Dubai to Manila in the same month.

A major initiative under the ATM brand, and now in its seventh year, the New Frontiers Award 2013 reinforced the overall focus of the programme, communicated under the theme 'Recover, Repair, Rebuild'.

Awarded to destinations that have overcome great adversity to bring much needed tourism back to their shores, the award also honours the strength and determination of the local people who work tirelessly to rebuild lives and communities following disaster as well as highlighting the crisis management capabilities of local tourism authorities.

"This year, as well as acknowledging the efforts of the Philippines in rebuilding its tourism infrastructure, we also looked back at past award recipients' Japan and Chile, and heard how the New Frontiers recognition has helped them on their road to recovery, and how they have rebuilt, or are continuing to reconstruct their respective tourism industries," remarked Walsh.

In addition to the prestigious crystal trophy, the New Frontiers Award comprises ATM exhibition space valued at US\$10,000 along with additional marketing support in promoting the outstanding tourism opportunities offered by the recipient nation.

The Philippines was selected as winner of the New Frontiers Award 2013 by a panel of judges consisting of industry professionals from across the globe. From an original selection of 10 countries, which was then refined to a shortlist also comprising New York state (Hurricane Sandy) and Pakistan (2012 floods).

Photo-caption (left to right): Mr. Benito C. Bengzon, Jr., Assistant Secretary, International Tourism Promotions, Department of Tourism Middle East office – Philippines, receiving his award from Mark Walsh, Portfolio Director, Reed Travel Exhibitions.

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