

PRESS RELEASE : LAUNCHING OF COMMEMORATIVE STAMP AND FIRST DAY COVER (MARP)

KUALA LUMPUR, 8 March 2012 - Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), Datuk Seri Panglima Dr. Maximus Johnity Ongkili today launched the Commemorative Stamps and First Day Cover of the Malaysian Antarctic Research Programme (MARP) at the National Science Centre.

The stamps highlight the achievements of the Malaysian Antarctic Research Programme (MARP) as well as the special visit of the 13th Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Wathiqu Billah Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin Ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Mahmud Al-Muktafi Billah Shah to the Antarctic from 20th to 23rd November last year. The royal visit was held in conjunction with Malaysia's accession into the Antarctic Treaty System 1959 on 31 October 2011.

The stamps will be sold to the public beginning today Thursday, 8 March 2012. The stamps, measuring 35mm x 35mm and 70mm x 35mm in size (14 perforations each) are available in 2 denominations, 60sen (1 design) and 90sen (2 se-tenant design) and one stamp sheet contains 20 pieces of the stamps. The First Day Cover is at 50 sen each and can be purchased at all Pos Malaysia outlets countrywide. Folder at RM5.50 each is only available at selected outlets. The 60 sen stamp features the aerial view of the Antarctic continent. The Malaysian flag signifies that Malaysia is now party to the Antarctic Treaty System in preserving Antarctica for peace and science. The background is a scenic view of the midnight sun near Ross Island Antarctica.

The 90 sen se-tenant stamps feature an aerial view of the world which highlights the ice caps of the Arctic and Antarctic, and Malaysia as the only ASEAN and Muslim country with an active polar research program.

The se-tenant pair portrays the Emperor penguin, the largest of all living penguin species and a flock of Adelie penguins in the background of the "white desert". The scientist portrayed is a MARP atmospheric scientist setting up a Global Positioning System (GPS) to study interactions between the upper atmosphere and space weather. The microscopic photograph is a yeast endemic to Antarctica isolated from the sea ice by MARP microbiologists who are studying cold adaptation mechanism of Antarctic microbes.

The royal visit to the Antarctica has also resulted in the recent publishing of the pictorial book entitled "ANTARCTICA: A New Landmark of the Malaysian Antarctic Research Programme" and the government's decision to establish the Tuanku Mizan Royal Fellowship on Antarctic Research to fund young scientists to undertake research in Antarctica.

The launching of the Commemorative stamp and the First Day Cover is also part of the effort by the ministry to communicate the progress of Malaysia's involvement in Antarctica and popularise science among the public and younger generation. The launching is held in conjunction with Tahun Sains dan Gerakan Inovasi 2012 – Year of Science and Innovation Movement.

Malaysia's involvement in Antarctica began when Malaysia and other like-minded countries raised the issues on Antarctica at the United Nations General Assembly in 1983. In 1997, the Government of Malaysia approved the country's participation in scientific research in Antarctica. The Academy of Sciences Malaysia Task Force on Antarctica Research was then formed to develop and manage the Malaysian Antarctic Research Programme.

Following this development, Malaysian researchers started their research in Antarctica from 1999 in collaboration with a number of cooperating countries such as Chile, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Argentina, Ecuador, United States of America and others. Since then, 31 research projects have been undertaken in collaboration with cooperating countries. About 46 expeditions have been conducted at the Antarctica and Arctic involving more than 100 scientists from local universities and research institutes.

To date, the Programme has been successful in making Malaysia's scientific presence felt. Among others, Malaysia is a member of the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), Scientific Committee of Antarctic Research (SCAR), Asian Forum for Polar Sciences (AFOPS), Antarctica and the Global Climate System (AGCS), International Antarctic Institute (IAI), Modeling and Observational Studies of Antarctic Katabatics Action Group (MOSAK) as well as a member of Standing Committee on Antarctic Data Management (SCADM).

Now that Malaysia has acceded to the Antarctic Treaty System, Malaysia will play an active role both in scientific research and the governance of the region, including preparation of Malaysia's Antarctic Act.