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Malaysia hosts Les Clefs d'Or

FIRST TIME: The annual congress witnessed a gathering of nearly 500 Les Clefs d'Or concierges and industry partners from all over the world

KUALA LUMPUR
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THE Malaysian chapter of the prestigious Les Clefs d'Or, the Society of the Golden Keys Malaysia, hosted the 61st International Les Clefs d'Or Congress in the city.

Held for the first time in Malaysia, the annual congress witnessed a gathering of nearly 500 Les Clefs d'Or concierges and industry partners from all over the world including the Americas, Oceania, Scandinavia, Asia, Middle East and Central Europe.

The Union International des Concierge d'Hotels (UICH), based in Paris, France, represents nearly 4,000 hotel concierges from all over the world, all recognisable through the famed crossed golden keys or les clefs d'or that are worn proudly by members on their uniform lapels.

The five-day congress was organised and hosted by the Malaysian chapter of UICH, the Society of the Golden Keys Malaysia, led by its president, Ragu Kumarasamy, Chef Concierge of the Prince Hotel and Residence Kuala Lumpur. The event was given the support of the Tourism and Culture Ministry Malaysia, Tourism Malaysia, Malaysia Conference and Exhibition Bureau (MyCeb) and the Kuala Lumpur City Hall.

Both international and local industry partners such as American Express, Sofitel, Shangri-La, Leading Hotels of the World, International New York Times, Mayflower Tours and a host of other companies and organisations also contributed in sponsorship and assistance.

Officiated by the Tourism Malaysia director-general Datuk Mirza Mohammad Taiyab, the congress began with a colourful pa-



Some of the delegates striking a pose at the A Famosa during their day tour to Malacca.

rade of the section member country flags by students of KDU University, accompanied by the sound of cultural drums from the Malaysian Traditional Drum troupe.

This was followed by an opening cocktail gala carrying the theme, The Colours of the World.

Highlights of the congress included two main meetings, the board of directors meeting and the general assembly. Other activities for delegates included a Les Clefs d'Or Gives Back Activity — where a group of residents from an orphanage run by Badan Amal Kasih Sayang Malaysia were treated to a day of fun at Sunway Lagoon by delegates; day tours of Kuala Lumpur and Malacca; a dinner at Dataran Merdeka hosted by Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Seri Ahmad Phesal Talib; and a full-day education symposium.

During the general assembly, two new section members were inducted into UICH, namely Qatar, as the 44th section member, and Macau as

the 45th member.

Imelda Pongco, the wife of the late Andy Pongco, announced the winner of the 2014 Andy Pongco Award, James Elliott of the Society of the Golden Keys Great Britain.

The Andy Pongco Award is the most sought-after by the industry, established in 2008 in memory of Andy Pongco, a former international honorary president. It recognises outstanding young concierges and encourage them to become active participants in the UICH global network.

The congress ended on a high note with a grand closing gala held at the Hilton Kuala Lumpur ballroom.

The gala night saw delegates entertained by the traditional performers from Tourism Malaysia. A live band was also in attendance to keep the dance floor going till late in the night.

The next congress will be held in Mendoza, Argentina.



Tourism Malaysia director-general Datuk Mirza Mohammad Taiyob (centre) receiving a UICH International Honorary Member Diploma. Looking on are (from left) Society of the Golden Keys Malaysia president Ragu Kumarasamy, UICH International general secretary Michael Romei, UICH International president Emmanuel Vrettos and UICH International first vice-president Colin Toomey.