



MAIDEN CALL OF *COSTA SERENA* ON FIRST DAY OF CHINESE NEW YEAR STRENGTHENS SABAH'S CRUISE TOURISM GROWTH

KOTA KINABALU, 17 February 2026 – Sabah Ports Sdn Bhd proudly commemorated the maiden call of *Costa Serena* at Kota Kinabalu Port today, coinciding with the first day of Chinese New Year. The historic arrival underscores Sabah's strengthening profile within the regional cruise network and reaffirms the Port's readiness to support growing international cruise traffic.

The vessel berthed at approximately 8:00 a.m. and departed at 8:00 p.m. for her onward voyage to Muara Port. The call generated strong festive momentum in the city while delivering tangible economic value across tourism, retail, transport, and hospitality sectors.

Operated by Costa Cruises, a globally established cruise line founded in Genoa, Italy in 1854 and part of the Carnival Corporation portfolio, *Costa Serena* represents the calibre of international vessels increasingly calling at Sabah's ports.

Launched in 2007, *Costa Serena* is a 114,500-gross-tonne resort-class cruise ship with capacity for approximately 3,780 passengers and more than 1,000 crew members. Featuring comprehensive onboard hospitality, entertainment, and wellness facilities, the vessel's call reflects growing international confidence in Kota Kinabalu Port's infrastructure, marine services capability, and operational standards.

The commemorative ceremony was officiated by Deputy Chief Minister III of Sabah and State Minister for Ministry of Industrial Development, Entrepreneurship and Transport Sabah (MINDET), Datuk Ewon Benedick. Also in attendance were Datuk Donald P. Mojuntin, Chairman of Sabah Ports Authority, and Datuk Ahmad Rizal Dahli, Managing Director of Sabah Ports Sdn Bhd, alongside senior government officials and industry stakeholders.

In his address, Datuk Ewon Benedick highlighted the multiplier effect of cruise tourism, particularly its direct impact on local entrepreneurs, SMEs, tour operators, transport providers, and retail businesses. He noted that cruise arrivals contribute to immediate local spending while enhancing Sabah's visibility as a competitive tourism destination.

The ceremony concluded with a traditional plaque exchange between the ship's captain and port representatives, symbolizing enduring partnership and mutual commitment to future collaboration.

As Sabah continues to expand its cruise footprint, Sabah Ports Sdn Bhd remains focused on strengthening strategic partnerships, enhancing port facilities, and positioning Kota Kinabalu as a preferred gateway for international cruise itineraries.



Photo Caption: YB Datuk Ewon Benedick presents a commemorative plaque to the Captain of Costa Serena during the vessel's maiden call ceremony at Kota Kinabalu Port, witnessed by Datuk Donald P. Mojuntin and Datuk Ahmad Rizal Dahli on 17 February 2026.





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