

NO74 (F)
MAHATHIR

GENTING HIGHLANDS, OCT 20³¹ (BERNAMA) -- RAPID ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE ASEAN COUNTRIES HAS CREATED A VIABLE MARKET FOR TOURISM WITHIN THE REGION, PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD, SAID TODAY.

OPENING THE ASEAN TRAVEL FORUM HERE HE SAID THE ASEAN COUNTRIES ARE RICH IN SCENIC ATTRACTIONS AND THEIR DIVERSE CULTURAL HERITAGE SHOULD BE OF INTEREST TO OUR PEOPLES AND OTHERS OUTSIDE THE REGION.

WHAT WAS REQUIRED WAS ATTRACTIVE PACKAGING AND MORE AGGRESSIVE MARKETING OF EFFICIENTLY RUN TOURS.

THIS FORUM PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY FOR DISCUSSION AND EXCHANGES OF VIEWS ON THIS.

THE ASEAN REGION REMAINED AN AREA OF CONSIDERABLE GROWTH AND STABILITY AND THIS HAD ENABLED ASEAN TO CONCENTRATE ITS EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT GREATER SUCCESS IN MANY AREAS OF ITS ACTIVITIES. --BERNAMA MORE 1837/MD

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IT HAD ALSO ENABLED ASEAN TO COOPERATE MORE MEANINGFULLY WITH OTHER COUNTRIES AND REGIONS, HE ADDED.

THE ASEAN TRAVEL FORUM WHICH IS ORGANISED WITH THE COOPERATION OF BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS WAS AN EXAMPLE OF ASEAN COOPERATION, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID.

THE COMING TOGETHER OF ASEAN COUNTRIES FOR THE PURPOSES OF CREATING GREATER BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN THE TOURIST INDUSTRY ONCE AGAIN DEMONSTRATED ASEAN'S DETERMINATION TO FOSTER CLOSER COOPERATION AMONG ASEAN COUNTRIES.

"WE IN ASEAN FIRMLY BELIEVE IN REGIONAL COOPERATION AS A MEANS TO ACHIEVE GREATER OPPORTUNITY AND STABILITY FOR THE REGION", HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THAT THE TOURIST INDUSTRY IN MALAYSIA HAD BEEN GROWING AT AN ENCOURAGING AND STEADY PACE AND IT RANKED SEVENTH AFTER RUBBER, PETROLEUM, TIN, PALM OIL, SAWN LOGS AND SAWN TIMBER. --BERNAMA MORE 1840/MD

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FOREIGN EXCHANGE GENERATED BY THE TOURIST INDUSTRY IN MALAYSIA HAD ALMOST DOUBLED IN THE LAST 10 YEARS FROM \$312 MILLION IN 1970 TO \$616 MILLION LAST YEAR, HE SAID.

IN 1980 ABOUT 1.5 MILLION TOURISTS VISITED THE COUNTRY.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT BASED ON CURRENT TRENDS IT WAS ESTIMATED THE NUMBER OF TOURISTS VISITING MALAYSIA WOULD INCREASE TO 2.8 MILLION IN 1985.

A NUMBER OF PROJECTS UNDER THE FOURTH MALAYSIA PLAN WILL RESULT IN BETTER FACILITIES FOR PEOPLE VISITING THE COUNTRY.

THIS INCLUDED EXPANSION OF AIRPORTS, CONSTRUCTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE ROAD SYSTEM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE.

+WHILE WE DEVELOP THE COUNTRY ECONOMICALLY, WE ARE ALSO GIVING EMPHASIS TO DEVELOPING AND SUSTAINING OUR NATIONAL CULTURE AND VALUES+, HE ADDED.

+THIS WILL BE REFLECTED IN THE ENVIRONMENT, PARTICULARLY IN THE ARCHITECTURE, IN THE ARTS AND IN THE WAY OF LIFE OF OUR PEOPLE.+ --BERNAMA MORE 1855/MD

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ABOUT 500 DELEGATES FROM THE FIVE MEMBER COUNTRIES AND MORE THAN 100 PARTICIPANTS FROM OUTSIDE THE REGION ARE ATTENDING THE WEEK-LONG FORUM.

THAI DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER TUN THANAT KHOMAN AND MALAYSIAN TRADE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER, TENGKU AHMAD RITHAUDDEEN WILL ALSO ADDRESS THE FORUM. --BERNAMA 1857/MD