

**Boost Tourism To Realise People-Centred ASEAN - Najib  
Bernama  
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KUALA LUMPUR, June 2 (Bernama) -- With ASEAN expected to generate a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$3 trillion (RM11 trillion) by 2017, there is a real opportunity to boost the travel industry and promote intra-region tourism, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The prime minister said this would enhance appreciation for the respective cultures and heritage of the 10-member grouping of Southeast Asian nations.

Launching the GOASEAN travel channel on Astro Channel 737 in the capital, Tuesday, he said: "And in a year where the region moves towards economic integration, what better way to prove our commitment than a platform to share with each other, and the wider world, all that is truly unique and beautiful about our region."

Najib said that the initiative was not only about tourism and travel as it was also about realising the vision of a people-centred ASEAN.

"It's something that I believe is important to our region moving forward. It's about making ASEAN and the ties that bind us tangible realities for the citizens of our 10 nations," he said.

GOASEAN is touted as the world's first ASEAN travel channel dedicated to showcasing the natural beauty and rich cultural heritage of this region.

Najib said that GOASEAN was a fine example of the kind of innovation that could drive growth, an initiative that would go on to provide opportunities, attract investment and help develop talent and infrastructure throughout the region.

With a market of over 630 million people and a large proportion of young and tech-savvy consumers in ASEAN, he said, GOASEAN would provide a unique platform by engaging audiences on television, online and via social media.

He said GOASEAN had the potential to grow into a truly international platform and should be able to demonstrate how ASEAN was a globally competitive destination for both leisure and commerce, supported by world-class infrastructure.

He reckoned that the benefits of showcasing all that ASEAN had to offer would not end with tourism as the potential knock-on effects were substantial.

"Especially when we consider that foreign direct investment in ASEAN has outstripped even China in recent years. GOASEAN provides the perfect opportunity to broadcast the benefits of our region to a global audience," Najib said.

Pointing out that it had begun as a Malaysian initiative as part of the country's

chairmanship of ASEAN this year, Najib expressed the hope that it would grow into a vehicle that could help further enhance cooperation among ASEAN members.

He said partnerships had already been forged with local travel agencies to provide an integrated online booking system that would be available through GOASEAN.com.

"With its large potential, I urge the private sector to support and maximise this platform to reach out to the entire region," he added.

ASEAN comprises Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

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