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Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei agrees on resetting tourism sector in post-pandemic era



MANILA/JAKARTA, Nov 28 (Bernama): Countries in the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asean Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) have agreed to resetting tourism towards greater sustainability, inclusion, resilience, and innovation to benefit local communities.

The subregion's gross domestic product rose to 2.4 per cent in 2021 versus a contraction of 3.3 per cent in 2020, but tourism remains the hardest hit sector with the slowest growth in tourist arrivals.

Ministers and stakeholders met in West Kalimantan, Indonesia on Saturday for the 25th BIMP-EAGA meeting with Malaysia being represented by the Economic Planning Unit director-general Datuk Nor Azmie Diron.

Ministers opined that implementing the BIMP-EAGA and Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) tourism recovery communications plan would attract travellers, given the subregion was safe and easy to visit.

"The ministers also welcome the conclusion of the One Borneo Quarantine Initiative and look forward to the signing of the Letter of Intent in 2023," Nor Azmie said in a statement today.

On the BIMP-EAGA Vision 2025 Mid-Term Review, he said Malaysia has proposed suggestions to make the outcome more dynamic for the future economic development projects and programmes.

Other issues discussed include connectivity, digital transformation, the role of agro-industry and fisheries development in addressing climate change and food crisis, as well as partnerships with development partners and clean energy transition.

Nor Azmie said BIMP-EAGA looks forward to the recommendations from the study on the Renewable Energy Certificate Potential, which will review the Renewable Energy market for potential investments.

"There is a proposal to initiate the cross-border power grid interconnectivity to help address the growing energy demands and provide sustainable and reliable energy access to communities," he said.

Meanwhile, the BIMP-EAGA Business Council (BEBC) is urged to be a driving force to facilitate greater involvement of micro, small and medium enterprises as an important engine of growth.

The Sarawak Business Federation inked two memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with West Kalimantan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KADIN) East Kalimantan during the BEBC meeting.

Nor Azmie said the MoUs aimed at strengthening business relations and developing reciprocal cooperation to promote economic growth and development of both countries.

On the institutional capacity of the BIMP-EAGA Facilitation Centre, he said Malaysia will undertake due diligence on Brunei's proposal to set up the BIMP-EAGA Secretariat in the country before providing the decision in due course. - Bernama