

AirAsia plans to launch air taxi, drone delivery service

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Jakarta : Malaysia's AirAsia Group Bhd plans to launch an air taxi service and the country's first drone delivery service as the budget carrier seeks to diversify amid the coronavirus pandemic, the company's CEO said on March 13.

As part of the group's diversification push, it also aims to launch a ride-hailing service next month as COVID-19 continues to hit air travel.

"The air taxi will have a pilot and four seats. At the moment, we have our team working on this upcoming service by AirAsia," Chief Executive Tony Fernandes said at the Youth Economic Forum 2021, according to reports.

The service should start operating in about 18 months, Fernandes said.

He also announced that the airline's logistics unit Teleport, which is currently testing an urban drone delivery service with state-backed firm Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre (MaGIC), would conduct its first commercial delivery by the end of this year.

"(The) idea was brought up three weeks ago and now it's reality," he said.

Fernandes said the group was recovering from the impact of the pandemic and had used the opportunity to accelerate its digital transformation.

The struggling airline, which reported a fifth straight quarterly loss in November, has been seeking to raise USD 613.95 million from loans and investors.

