

05 AUG 1997

Asean

REGIONAL CELEBRATIONS FOR ASEAN'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 5 (Bernama) -- Wide-scale celebrations are lined up in the capitals of Asean member countries to mark the 30th anniversary of the Southeast Asian regional grouping on Friday.

The celebrations are taking place just two weeks after Asean admitted Laos and Myanmar as full members, boosting the Asean family to nine, just one short of the vision of its founding fathers of an Asean 10.

Asean now groups Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Cambodia was supposed to join the grouping but its entry was delayed due to the political turmoil in Phnom Penh.

Nevertheless, the Asean countries have drawn up a year-long programme to mark the anniversary under the theme "One Asean into the 21st Century".

Among the events are the opening of Liwasang Asean (Asean Park) in Manila and the launch of the Asean anthem "We Are One".

On the eve of the anniversary, an Asean Festival of Songs and the Asean Award for Culture and Information will be held in Jakarta.

The festivities at the Asean secretariat in Jakarta will kick off the following day with a reception to be graced by Indonesia's President Suharto as the guest-of-honour. Suharto is scheduled to deliver a speech as well.

Taped congratulatory messages of the other eight Asean heads of government, including Malaysia's Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, will also be played at a laser and light presentation.

The evening will be capped with an entertainment show titled "A Touch of Asean".

Malaysia will mark the occasion with a dinner to be hosted by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the Putra World Trade Centre for members of the diplomatic corps and senior Foreign Ministry officials on Friday.

According to Asean-Malaysia Deputy Director-General Mohamed Yusof Ahmad, the guests will also get to view a recorded speech by Dr Mahathir in conjunction with the anniversary.

The Philippines, the host of the Asean Ministerial Meeting next year, will inaugurate Liwasang Asean on Friday. A memorial plaque inscribed with the the full text of the Bangkok 1967 Declaration on the formation of Asean will be unveiled.

Singapore will hold a tourism promotion on "Rediscover Asean". Thailand, Vietnam, Brunei and Myanmar would also partake in the celebrations by holding either receptions, exhibitions or airing special documentaries on Asean.

Special first day covers, commemorative stamps, telephone cards and coins will also be issued by the member countries.

The highlight of the celebrations will be the convening of a commemorative summit on the occasion of the second Asean Informal Summit in Kuala Lumpur, scheduled for Dec 14-16, during which Asean leaders will meet their counterparts from China, Japan and South Korea.

Several Asean dialogue partners will also mark the occasion. The United States will issue a special Asean publication while Japan will organise an "Asean Week". -- BERNAMA

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