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'Working together benefits Asia'

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COMMON GOAL:

Continued peace, growth no longer a dream, says Najib

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ASIAN countries stand to gain immensely if their governments work together, while respecting the principles of tolerance, dialogue and moderation, said Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

The prime minister, speaking at the Boao Forum for Asia 2015 opening ceremony here yesterday, said Asia could maintain growth and build on common prosperity through the principles of sustainability and inclusivity, and by focusing on the people.

He said Asia's common destiny of continued peace and growth was no longer a dream, but was well within grasp, with the right ingredients and a strong will.

Quoting a Chinese proverb, "Do not fear going forward slowly; fear only to stand still", Najib said "standing still" was not one of the characteristics of the continent.

"Everyone has heard of 'Asian dragons' or 'tigers', and our era has been talked about as being the Asian Century for more than 25 years.

"Now, however, is the time to ensure that this promise becomes a reality."

He said Asia had proven its strength and resilience, weathering the world financial crisis far better than many other economies, because of the partnership among

its countries.

"Intra-Asian trade is flourishing. In fact, globally, it is the fastest growing trade route, and in 2013, it represented 25 per cent of the continent's annual exports.

"Yes, we are diverse in culture, race and religion.

"But, look at what we can do together."

He said in October last year, Malaysia was one of 21 countries to sign up as founding members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

"The bank predicts that the number may grow to 35 in due course.

"Within the last few weeks, (it was) first Britain, then Germany, France and Italy... All agreed to join us as founding members.

"Europe's largest economies have every confidence that the bank will play a huge role in shaping the future.

"And, they don't want to miss out on that opportunity."

Najib said for Malaysia, the theme of this year's forum — Asia's New Future: Towards a Community of Common Destiny — could not be more appropriate.

"We are chairing Asean this year, and reaching for Asia's common destiny complements the vision to establish an Asean Community by the end of this year," he said, adding that Malaysia had adopted "Our People, Our Community, Our Vision" as the theme for its chairmanship.

"All development must be inclusive and no single community should be marginalised or left behind.

"We will ensure that fair emphasis is given to sustainable and equitable economic development," Najib said, adding that Malaysia recognised that in an interconnected world, trade and wealth creation



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak speaking at the Boao Forum for Asia 2015 in Hainan yesterday. Bernama pic.

were not zero-sum games.

"Communities and nations need not fear each other's successes.

"Cultivating spheres of cooperation rather than competing spheres of influence will lead to progress for all.

"If we can do that — and there is no reason to think we cannot — then, Asia's new future will be brighter than ever.

"It is time to fully embrace our common destiny of peace, development and prosperity for all."

Najib, who arrived here on Friday, also had meetings with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and Kazakhstan Prime Minister Karim Massimov on the sidelines of the forum before leaving for Kuala Lumpur yesterday afternoon.

On Friday night, hours after his arrival in Boao, the prime minister had a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, followed by a dinner.

During the meeting, which was at Xi's personal invitation, both leaders discussed bilateral ties in the areas of trade, education, financial services, infrastructure development and defence.