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PRIME NEWS



Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** receiving the **Report to Asean Leaders** from Asean Business Advisory Council chairman **Tan Sri Dr Munir Majid** at the Asean Business and Investment Summit 2015 in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. With them is International Trade and Industry Minister **Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed**.  
Pic by Ghazali Kori

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# Mustapa: Public must know AEC's benefits

**AWARENESS:** SMEs should know perks of closer economic integration among Asean, says minister

KUALA LUMPUR

MUCH has been said about the integration of the Asean Economic Community (AEC) and the benefits it will bring to the region, yet awareness about the matter among the public is still low.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed said there was a need for Asean countries to prioritise providing information, especially to the grassroots, on AEC's implementation. "In the last few months, there has

been more awareness of Asean and I'm happy more people are aware of what Asean stands for and what AEC is about," he said at the Special Ministerial Panel with Asean Economic Ministers at the Asean Business and Investment Summit 2015 here yesterday.

He said awareness should be improved with two groups of people — schoolchildren and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

"We should demonstrate the benefits of closer economic integration to the SMEs, while also engaging school and university students by talking about the importance of Asean and the AEC."

Earlier, Mustapa said issues related to non-tariff barriers would continue to be the main focus among

Asean countries to ensure the smooth establishment of the AEC.

He said it was vital to resolve issues before AEC's implementation to ensure the sustainable development of the region.

"In my view, we will achieve a lot and I'm confident that by 2025, we will be successful in inter-Asean trade, integration in investments, non-tariff barriers and mutual recognition agreements between Asean countries.

"We're excited and happy to work together. There's been a lot of chemistry and synergy among Asean

countries and that has helped us move forward to achieve inter-Asean trade and inter-Asean investment. There's also more connectivity among Asean economies."

