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Najib: Asia needs to be 'borderless'

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The region needs to emphasise more on forging stronger inter-Asian ties

by P PREM KUMAR

ASIAN countries should have greater integration to realise a "borderless" Asia that would harness diversity, inclusivity and sustainability in the region, said Prime Minister (PM) Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Razak.

Speaking at the Asian Business Leaders Conclave, Najib said a more integrated Asian region would enable countries to rely on own innovation in creating new technologies, foster own talent and set new global standards for corporate governance, productivity and dynamism.

"We have youthful and increasingly well-educated populations. We are blessed with many resources, even in these challenging times for the world economy.

"We have been maintaining growth rates that are the envy of Europe and the West," Najib told 400 attendees during the

launch of the two-day summit yesterday.

The premier also said while efforts have been taken towards integration, the region needs to emphasise more on forging stronger inter-Asian ties.

Najib further said the countries should also capitalise on common matters and learn from each other by sharing the best practices, apart from seeking new ways of collaborating. "The centre of gravity of power, population and prosperity has long been shifting eastwards, and it is right that we should take responsibility for, and control of, our own destinies.

"We seek friendly relations with all but the days when far-off powers seek to dictate the futures and the policies of Asian countries are over," said Najib.

On India, Najib said between 2003 and 2015, trade between the two countries have increased by more than four-fold.

Last year, Malaysia's trade with India amounted to nearly RM47 billion, an increase of 3.5% from 2014.

Najib also offered a helping



Pic by Afif Abd Halim

Modi delivering his speech through a video conference from India during The Economics Times Asian Business Leaders Conclave 2016 at Mandarin Oriental hotel in Kuala Lumpur yesterday

hand to the Indian government, which is in the middle of implementing Goods and Services Tax (GST) in the country.

"In connection with the Indian government's plans to roll out GST in 2017, we are happy to share our own experience in the introduction of GST with a high-level delegation from India that had visited Malaysia recently.

"Such interactions are clearly to the benefit both our countries, and they are in the spirit of this conclave, which is moving towards a 'borderless' Asia," the PM said.

Indian PM Narendra Modi also spoke in the summit via live video conferencing. The Indian leader said India will continue to work closely with Malaysia and other Asian countries as the "future is here".

He said a close relation with Malaysia — reinforced in Modi's visit to Kuala Lumpur last year — is integral to the success of India's Act East policy.

"As I have said before, the 21st Century is the century for Asia. Leaders in the region have placed great efforts in promoting integration in the

region, but more has to be done," he said.

Malaysia, Modi said, has shown great resilience in surviving the global economic slowdown, in line with Najib's goal of propelling the country to become a developed economy by 2020.

"Our strong ties have also been reinforced by a heavy presence of Indian businesses in Malaysia and vice versa," Modi noted.

Modi extended an invite to Malaysian companies and investors to partake in India's ongoing economic transformation, where the Indian government has introduced investor-friendly approaches.

Modi also invited Najib to visit India in conjunction with the 25th Anniversary of Malaysia-India Dialogue Relations. Najib welcomed the invitation and said he is eager to meet a "better" India under Modi's strong leadership.

The two-day Asian Business Leaders Conclave 2016 is organised by India-based publication, the *Economic Times*, and supported by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry as well as the Indian government.