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PM on how to track removal of Asean trade barriers

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ASEAN plans to implement a scorecard to monitor each member's efforts to reduce trade barriers which have increased significantly and are hampering efforts to integrate the 10 economies.

Malaysia has voiced its concerns that non-tariff barriers (NTBs) and non-tariff measures (NTMs) jumped significantly between 2000 and 2015.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak proposed implementing the scorecard during the 30th Asean Summit on Saturday that was chaired by Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.

"Reduction of NTBs and NTMs must be done if we are to increase our trade from the US\$2.6 trillion now to US\$9.2 trillion in 2050.

"NTBs and NTMs have increased from 1,634 to 5,975. From the scorecard, we can determine when the reduction can be done.

"It will also mean a commitment to reducing the cost of conducting trade, including port charges and Customs procedures," he told Malaysian pressmen at the end of the summit.

Najib said the Asean secretariat would have to push for the move and that Asean trade ministers must champion it.

He admitted that all the members were guilty of imposing trade barriers.



Linked by a common purpose: (From left) Najib, Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Duterte, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, Joko and Laos' Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith obliging cameramen at the summit in Manila. — Reuters

"I think it is a tit-for-tat sort of thing," he said.

Also, Najib said, he received strong support from Indonesian President Joko Widodo for Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand to lobby the European Parliament on its resolution calling for the EU to phase out the use of vegetable oils in biodiesel by 2020.

It was alleged that the production of vegetable oils was unsustainable and led to deforestation.

He said phasing out the oils has not happened yet but it "will greatly

affect 600,000 smallholders in Malaysia and 2.4 million in Indonesia."

"Jokowi expressed support for my proposal and for the three countries to counter the move," he added.

During the one-day summit, the 10 Asean leaders also spoke extensively on the situation in the Korean Peninsula, most expressed their concerns over the brewing tensions there.

"Leaders told Duterte to tell US President (Donald) Trump that we

must find ways to reduce tensions. And that sabre rattling or 'nuclear rattling' is not a good thing to do," Najib said.

Duterte indicated that he would tell Trump to avoid war in the region because the rest of Asia would suffer from any nuclear fallout.

Watch the video
thestartv.com

