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'Get rid of trade barriers'

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Taking a break: Najib paying a visit to Naahlim Bakery in Manila. With him are two of the owners, Ungku Raad Azeraai Ungku Mohd Najib (centre) and Mohd Kurniawan Naim Mokhtar. — Bernama



We must work to facilitate intra-Asean business further, says Najib

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ASEAN still has a long way towards integrating its 10 economies due to a high number of trade barriers in the grouping.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said between 2000 and 2015, non-tariff barriers (NTBs) and measures (NTMs) rose from 1,634 to 5,975.

"These NTBs and NTMs must be reduced and ultimately removed. This is a stubborn global problem, but it is in Asean's own interest to lead the way in this endeavour," he said in his keynote address at the Prosperity for All Summit organised by Asean Business Advisory Council.

The Prime Minister is here to attend the 30th Asean Summit today.

Najib said efforts to bring tariffs in Asean down to zero must be pursued vigorously.

"We must work to facilitate intra-Asean trade further. To achieve US\$9.2 trillion

(RM40 trillion) by 2050, there has to be a 20% reduction in fixed trade costs.

"We need to work towards facilitative measures such as national single windows seamlessly linked to Asean single window and standardised customs procedures," he said.

The Prime Minister said Asean had made great strides in the last five decades, with its economy having multiplied 28 times from US\$87.2bil (RM378bil) to US\$2.5 trillion (RM10.8 trillion).

"When we signed the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Establishment of the Asean Community in November 2015, we were looking at an Asean economy which was close to US\$2.7 trillion (RM11.7 trillion), the seventh largest in the world.

"And recent estimates suggest that taken as one, Asean is now the sixth largest economy in the world," he said.

On Malaysia's experience, he said the Government did not want any Malaysian to be left behind regardless of ethnicity, religion and community.

"One of the lessons of the rise of extremist populism in Europe is that a neglected underclass – those left behind by economic growth, prosperity and the benefits of globalisation –

can overturn elections and political systems," said Najib.

He said as Asean entered its 50th year this year, the grouping must raise awareness of Asean and to make it feel real, relevant and tangible to all citizens.

"We are one of the most successful regional associations in the world and while some criticised us for moving too slowly, we have avoided the downsides of moving too fast.

"The turmoil in the European Union and strong swells of anti-EU sentiment there, demonstrate the dangers of Europe-wide institutions not having sufficiently won the support and affection of member state populations.

"At the same time, there is a large body of EU citizens who think of themselves as citizens of EU. I am not saying that Asean countries want to go that far, but to what extent do our people think of themselves as being members of Asean?" he said.

Watch the video
thestartv.com

