

Najib wants an end to maids issue as soon as possible

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PHNOM PENH: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has asked Indonesia for a quick solution to the domestic maids issue.

Najib said he had conveyed this to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono through his vice-president Boediono, who was representing Susilo at the 20th Asean Summit here.

"I have asked for President Susilo to find a quick solution to the maid problem," Najib said.

The issue took centrestage recently when Indonesian authorities reportedly imposed new conditions on its maids to Malaysia which, among others, would require them to perform only one task for a minimum salary of RM700 per month.

Najib said he would also discuss with his Cambodian counterpart Hun Sen the possibility of engaging the services of maids from the country again after it imposed a ban in October.

Earlier, he said efforts must be made to increase the younger generation's interest in Asean as they would be the ones to take the regional body's ideals forward.

There was currently among youths, he said, some detachment from Asean, viewing it as a distant institution with no relevance to them.

"It is precisely this mindset that we need to change by increasing the younger generation's interest in Asean and helping them see and understand its power and potential.

"To achieve this, we must develop programmes, projects and initiatives which involve them in meaningful ways. I speak from experience when I say that it is a lot more fun to participate and see the benefits of Asean in person rather than to sit up late at night writing an essay on them."

Najib was delivering his keynote address on "Leadership Challenges in Asean: Meeting Tomorrow's Needs and Expectations" at the Ninth Asean Leadership Forum yesterday.

He said leadership was key to human development and creativity, lamenting the sad fact that the Asian workforce was often still considered low-skilled with little knowledge.

"We should not be afraid to follow the West's example of investing heavily on the personal development of employees. Yet, for this to happen, we must change the mindset of employees and employers by ensuring that development is seen as an investment, rather than cost," he said.

Najib added that while Asians might be dedicated and hardworking employees, the best and most creative ideas still came from elsewhere.

Part of this, he said, was because schools focus narrowly on traditional subjects, rather than nourish young people's artistic and creative sides.

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