

**"Asean Way", Principle Of Non-interference Has Been Fruitful – Najib
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 8 (Bernama) -- The 'Asean Way', based on consensus and the principle of non-interference, has been fruitful as proven by the process of democracy that has started in Myanmar, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Saying that the 'Asean Way' had also been featured in other instances, the Prime Minister said these included the approach adopted by Malaysia in resolving the claims of neighbouring countries, that could be settled amicably.

"Although Asean still holds strongly to the principle of non-interference, the Asean mechanisms centred on what is described as the 'Asean Way' enabled various sensitive and complex issues to be resolved through negotiations," he said.

In his special message in conjunction with the 45th Asean Day celebration which was aired Tuesday night, Najib pointed out that the Asean principle of non-interference had proven to be effective in maintaining peace and stability in the South-east Asian region.

He said all the positive factors resulting from the non-interference principle had been adopted in the best manner possible by the leaders of the member countries to draw up various initiatives and development plans to enhance the standard and quality of life of the people.

"It's obvious that the existence of Asean has provided a catalyst in narrowing down the gap in the socio-economic development between the countries in this region," Najib said.

Recalling the events faced by Asean since its formation, he said Asean's capability to become the regional political framework to preserve peace and stability in the region had frequently be doubted.

According him, the effectiveness of Asean's efforts had been questioned because of its principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of its member countries which had been described as not effective in resolving conflicts in the region.

"However, despite the criticism, the Asean mechanism has been proven to be effective in preserving peace, stability and prosperity in the region. Thus, it is not surprising that the organisation that began with only five member nations in 1967, has expanded to 10 member countries," he said.

The Prime Minister pointed out that the active participation of the dialogue partners during meetings and conferences at the Asean level represented a recognition by the international community of the ability and potentials of Asean itself.

Najib said that issues of mutual interest such as security, drug smuggling, anti-terrorism and environment could be discussed and tackled together to achieve the best result.

He added that Asean was now among the most dynamic region in the world, and with a market size of more than 500 million people and an accumulated GNI (Gross National Income) worth US\$2.15 trillion, Asean had achieved an encouraging success with full of potentials in future.

Asean, he said, had been strengthened with the signing of the Asean Charter which had transformed the organisation into an entity based on rules besides boosting integration and connectivity between the member countries in the fields of politics, economy and culture.

"Asean is always sensitive to the change in time. Asean is apprehensive that it must continue to be relevant to the aspiration of its citizens. Based on this awareness, the Asean leaders had launched the Asean Connectivity Agenda in 2010," he said.

Explaining that the agenda aimed to ensure that Asean could be accessed through the transportation and communications network, Najib said: "Imagine the possibilities available if all the products from Asean member nations could move easily from one nation to the other," he said.

In addition, Najib said Asean had set up the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC).

He also pointed out that Asean was now in the final stages of drawing up the Human Rights Declaration which would be adopted by the member nations in preserving human rights in the region.

"I'm convinced that with the maturity of relations between the Asean member nations based on the concept of Asean centrality fuelled by the spirit of Asean solidarity, such problems could certainly be amicably resolved," he said.

Meanwhile, Najib said the Malaysian government would continue to intensify efforts to bring Asean to its people through the implementation of outreach programmes focusing on the introduction of history, value system, culture and the importance of Asean.

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