

**Need For Asia, Europe To Accelerate Trade – Najib
Bernama
November 05, 2012
From Jamaluddin Muhammad**

VIENTIANE, Nov 5 (Bernama) -- Asia hopes to increase its trade with Europe once the latter overcomes its financial crisis, Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said Monday.

He said trade between them could be further accelerated through the removal of trade barriers and protectionism.

"Asia sees Europe as an important region in getting investment through foreign direct investment and new technology, especially green technology," he told reporters after attending the first day's session of the two-day Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) at the National Convention Centre, here.

Najib said he also hoped that the free trade agreements between Malaysia and Europe and between Asean and Europe could materialise soon.

Europe, on the other hand, he said, viewed Asia as an important global engine of growth as this year Asia enjoyed economic growth of between five and seven per cent while Europe, one per cent.

In facilitating trade between the two regions, Najib said, some of the proposals made during the Doha Round were doable, including rejecting protectionism and promoting trade liberation.

Najib said countries with some fiscal space should further strengthen their economy so that they could contribute to enhancing trade between the two regions.

"Malaysia, which falls in this category, has increased its economic growth to five per cent this year," he said.

Najib also held three separate bilateral meetings, with French President Francois Hollande, Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg and Pakistani Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, at the convention centre on the sidelines of the summit.

"Hollande requested to meet me to state that Malaysia is an important country and the need to enhance bilateral trade," Najib said.

Hollande had expressed his country's readiness to offer military and civilian products to Malaysia, including fighter jets, helicopters and defence systems, said Najib.

The Malaysian prime minister said he was also glad to note that Air France would launch its direct flight between France and Malaysia in April next year.

During the discussions with the Norwegian leader, Najib said, Norway expressed willingness to share with Malaysia its latest technology in oil and gas.

"Their technology could double oil extraction, and the robotic technology could carry out oil exploration in sea depths of more than 1,000 metres," said Najib.

Norway, he said, was also interested in offering Malaysia its ship-to-ship missiles as Malaysia was enhancing its military modernisation programme.

Najib said his Pakistani counterpart, among others, had invited him to attend the forthcoming D-8 meeting of developing countries in Pakistan this month.

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