

**Malaysia Hopes To Make Asean Comfortable For All - Muhyiddin
Bernama
August 8, 2014**

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 8 (Bernama) -- The concept Asean premised on the people mooted by Malaysia as Asean chairman next year is aimed at making the region a comfortable place for everyone, said Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

He said it included a better standard of living, a more effective and responsive flow of government administration, improving women's capabilities, strengthening environmental protection and better opportunities for all.

Malaysia was very committed to making Asean a credible regional organisation, he said.

"This means creating a society which shares an identity and strategic direction under a strong regional organisation called the Asean Community," he said.

Muhyiddin was speaking at the launch of the Asean Food and Cultural Festival in conjunction with Asean Day 2014 here tonight. It was held together with an Aidilfitri open house organised by the Malaysian Youth Council.

Muhyiddin stressed that Asean programmes which had been planned should be given priority so as to bring the people of Asean together.

He also said he wanted to stress on Asean activities which involved the youths.

"I want to encourage programmes and activities which will encourage closer ties between Asean youths," he said.

Muhyiddin also said that peace in the region had attracted foreign investment to Malaysia as well as other Asean nations.

"The result is that Southeast Asia has become a prosperous and strong region and Asean can play a major role in regional affairs," he said.

Asean was established by five founding member countries - Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand through an agreement known as the Bangkok Declaration signed on Aug 8, 1967.

Since then its membership has grown to include Brunei Darussalam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam.

Muhyiddin said the stability and peace within Asean for almost 50 years had benefited Malaysia which had enjoyed rapid socio-economic growth.

In his speech, Muhyiddin alluded to the sadness felt in the country and beyond brought about by the twin tragedies of the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 on March 8 and the downing of MAS Flight MH17 on July 17.

"Despite the sorrow and despair, Malaysia is grateful and overwhelmed by the support shown by Asean member states and all citizens of the world.

"It illustrates unity in diversity. On behalf of the government of Malaysia, I would like to thank everyone for the support given to us," he said.

On the Asean Food and Cultural Festival, Muhyiddin said it was a good initiative to show the spirit of Asean through traditional foods and culture.

"The Aidilfitri open house will also allow Asean communities to enjoy and observe the unity among the different races of Malaysia," he added.

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