

**People Must Ensure Asean Becomes Main Pedestal For Peaceful Malaysia - Najib
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 8 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has called on Malaysians to pool their resources to ensure that Asean remains as the main pedestal that will keep Malaysia peaceful, stable and prosperous.

He said that Asean solidarity was one of the main factors that contributed to peace, stability and prosperity in the region and Malaysia would not enjoy progress if the region was embroiled in conflicts among themselves.

"As one of the founding members of Asean, Malaysia should be proud of the efforts and role played by the country to ensure the success of the block.

"Since its establishment in 1976, Asean had become the main thrust for foreign relations.

"The setting up of Asean formed an important point in the efforts to create a peaceful, stable and prosperous South-east Asian region," said Najib in his message in conjunction with the 47th Asean anniversary, which is celebrated on Aug 8, each year.

He said that Asean solidarity had succeeded in the block gaining the trust of the world community and was now ready to be integrated fully in the community.

Najib said Asean had the objective of creating a forward-looking community, playing a major role in the development of regional issues, contributing to the development of the community that was responsible and free from conflicts and vibrant in terms of the economy.

"All these will make Asean closer to the people and subsequently turn it into an organisation of caring and responsible society," he said.

Referring to the selection of Malaysia as the Asean Chair next year, the Prime Minister said it was the responsibility of Kuala Lumpur to lead and guide efforts to strengthen the block in the post-2015 period.

He said that the coming chairmanship was most important to Malaysia because during that time, the Asean Community would be formed.

"It is our intention to enhance the involvement of all parties that have interests in Asean civities.

"For this purpose, Malaysia upon becoming chairman in 2015 has chosen the main theme, that is People-Centered Asean," he said.

Najib said the formation of Asean, which is centred on the people, could be considered as a concrete move towards realising the aspiration of the people to achieve good governance, transparency, higher standard of living, sustainable development, women empowerment and greater opportunities for everyone.

In order to ensure that Malaysians were involved in these noble efforts, he said the government would undertake various efforts to bring Asean closer to the people in this country.

"We will intensify efforts in the next few months to raise public awareness on Asean," he said.

Meanwhile, Najib said that the slogan 'Moving Forward in Unity to a Peaceful and Prosperous Community' chosen by Myanmar as the Asean Chair this year was most appropriate.

"The slogan is most appropriate because it reminds us that Asean must always be forward thinking and progressive," he added.

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