

## **Najib Joins Asian, European Leaders For ASEM In Milan**

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**From Leslean Arshad**

MILAN (Italy), Oct 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak joined European and Asian leaders for the 10th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit here Thursday, calling for the two regions to push for greater cooperation and connectivity.

At the opening ceremony held at Milano Congressi or the MiCo Conference Centre here, Najib, who is the coordinator of the ASEM Asean sub-group, said the summit's theme 'Responsible Partnership for Sustainable Growth and Security', resonated well with Asean's hopes and aspirations for greater cooperation and connectivity between the two regions.

Expressing his belief that ASEM was vital to generating deeper synergy between economies of Asia and Europe, Najib said the two regions must continue to strengthen inter-regional trade, which was expected to exceed US\$1.8 trillion this year.

In order to do this, he said, it was important to remove the barriers and implement measures to improve the multilateral trade system.

"Let us continue to build on the wealth of our experience and forge closer cooperation and integration among ASEM partners," he said.

Najib also called on ASEM to play a greater role in creating conducive environment to increase trade and investment, growth and sustainable development given the significant benefits of inter-regional connectivity.

He also called on members to work towards a more comprehensive ASEM.

"Only with a highly effective region-to-region dialogue and cooperation framework can we ensure progress for our two regions," he said.

Najib also hoped that ASEM member partners would continue to share their experience and expertise with Asean to help the regional grouping achieve its goal for Asean integration.

Malaysia, which will assume the chairmanship of Asean in 2015, has chosen "People-Centred Asean" as the theme to represent its aspiration for good governance, higher standards of living, sustainable development, empowerment of women and greater opportunity for the people, he said.

Najib said Malaysia would also develop an Asean Post-2015 Vision, with an emphasis on further deepening regional integration.

Leaders from 51 countries gathered at this Italian city for two-day ASEM Summit beginning

today to deliberate on issues integral to the summit's theme.

On the sidelines of the summit, Najib is also scheduled to hold bilateral meetings with several leaders attending the ASEM.

They include Prime Minister of Italy Matteo Renzi, President of France Francois Hollande, Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel, Prime Minister of Finland Alexander Stubb, Prime Minister of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades, Prime Minister of Lithuania Algirdas Butkevicius.

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