

21st Asean Economic Ministers' Retreat, Kota Bharu Kelantan, Malaysia, 28 February - 1 March 2015

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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 25 (Bernama) -- Economic ministers from ASEAN member states will gather in Kota Bahru, Kelantan, from Feb. 28-March 1 at a crucial meeting to advance the plans for the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

The choice of Kelantan as the venue very much in line with:

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Malaysia's Theme of "Our People, Our Community, Our Vision".

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the ASEAN Framework for Equitable Development (AFEED) adopted in 2011 in Bali emphasising the importance of ensuring that regional economic integration benefits the entire region, including the lesser developed areas in the region.

The 21st ASEAN Economic Ministers' Retreat, one of the many ASEAN meetings held in conjunction with Malaysia's leadership of ASEAN in 2015, will be chaired by Y.B. Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamad, the Minister of International Trade and Industry. The ASEAN Economic Ministers attending the Retreat is in the Attachment A.

The Annual Retreat is normally convened with the objective to enable ASEAN Economic Ministers to assess and take stock of the overall achievements in regional integration and to consider and discuss possible new initiatives. However, the Retreat this year is critical in that the economic ministers will focus on ensuring that all core economic integration measures as stipulated in the AEC Blueprint are substantially realized.

This AEC is set to come into effect by Dec. 31, 2015. It is aimed at creating a single market and production base in the region to further bolster ASEAN's progress and prosperity. The recommendations from the private sector and the concerns over a perceived increase in non-tariff barriers to trade in the region will be one of the main agenda items to be discussed by the Ministers.

The Ministers will also visit the Customs, Immigration, Quarantine and Security Complex and Duty Free Zone at Rantau Panjang. This is to give ministers a first-hand view on the procedures in place at the border in terms of cross - border movement of goods, vehicles and people and issues faced by on the ground. This highlights the importance of border trade in driving the expansion of intra-ASEAN trade.

The Ministers are also expected to consider and provide guidance on the work to draft the

Post-2015 Economic Vision and Plan for ASEAN. This is another important deliverable for the Ministers as the expectation from the stakeholders is that ASEAN will be issuing a new and bold plan at the end of the year to set the direction for deeper regional integration for the next decade.

The AEM Retreat will be preceded by the 8th Meeting of the High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Economic Integration Working Group on Post-2015 Economic Vision and the Preparatory Senior Economic Officials Meeting.

As the Chair and host, Y.B. Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamad will also be taking the opportunity of the Retreat to garner support from the other ASEAN Member States for a number of side-events that are being organised in Malaysia, including:

- (i) Southeast Asia Regulatory Reform Conference (9-12 March 2015);
- (ii) ASEAN SME Showcase and Conference 2015 (26-28 May 2015);
- (iii) ASEAN Business and Investment Summit (November 2015); and
- (iv) Several ASEAN Youth and Young Entrepreneurs related summits.

The full programme of activities for the Retreat is in Attachment B (<http://mrem.bernama.com/pdf/Attachment%20B%20-%20Programme.doc>).

Attachment A

List of Ministers attending the 21st AEM Retreat

- (1) H.E. Pehin Dato Lim Jock Seng, Second Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Brunei Darussalam;
- (2) H.E Sun Chantol, Senior Minister and Minister of Commerce, Cambodia;
- (3) H.E. Rachmat Gobel, Minister of Trade, Indonesia;
- (4) H.E. Khemmani Pholsena, Minister of Industry and Commerce, Lao PDR;
- (5) H.E. Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed, Minister of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia;
- (6) H.E. Dr. Kan Zaw, Minister for National Planning and Economic Development, Myanmar;
- (7) H.E. Gregory L. Domingo, Secretary of Trade and Industry, the Philippines;

(8) H.E. Lim Hng Kiang, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore;

(9) H.E. General Chatchai Sarikalya, Minister of Commerce, Thailand represented by Ms. Apiradi Tantrporn Deputy Minister of Commerce;

(10) H.E. Dr. Vu Huy Hoang, Minister of Industry and Trade; and

(11) H.E. Le Luong Minh, Secretary General of ASEAN.

SOURCE: Ministry of International Trade and Industry Malaysia

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