

**Stress Equitable Development To Narrow Economic Gap In ASEAN: Najib  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said a more equitable development must be emphasised in efforts to narrow the economic gap among ASEAN member countries.

He said such efforts would be more effective with the willingness of the private sector, especially business players and financial institutions, to invest in infrastructure development in those countries.

"Infrastructure is the key part, we need to generate more capital for that. We have got some signals from different sources who have expressed their interest in funding infrastructure development.

"I would like to see that (the investment) going to some of the countries that are under-funded in terms of infrastructure," he said during a question and answer session at the Asean CAP10 CEO Summit here Thursday.

The prime minister, interviewed by former Asean Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan, was responding to a question on how 'money people' could help in bridging the development gap in ASEAN countries, in order to create a more conducive business environment and thus form a unified ASEAN community.

Najib said apart from infrastructure, investment in education and human capital development was also important in addressing the issue.

"We need to look at how we can support the human capital development, that to me is the key to the future of Asean," he said.

Malaysia, which assumes the Asean chairmanship after taking over from Myanmar, will hold the 26th ASEAN Summit at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre on April 26 and 27.

Admitting he is feeling the pressure in shouldering the responsibility as Asean chairman due to high expectations from many quarters, Najib said:

"Pressure is good as it will push us to be more determine in meeting the challenges," he said, adding that he aspired to ensure that the Asean spirit is felt by the grassroots.

On the kind of delivery that could be expected as Asean chairman, Najib said, "I want to not only stand up at the end of the year on behalf of Asean to declare ourselves as an economic community, but when that announcement is made, I would like that to be a very substantive announcement".

Surin said three of Malaysian former prime ministers had shared significant contributions

to Asean's history, including Najib's father, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, one of the founder of Asean, while Tun Mahathir Mohamad delivered Asean+3 and Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi delivered the East Asia Summit.

During the session, Najib also dropped a message for the millennial, noting that the realisation of Asean Community was a tangible benefit for the new generation.

"The key take away is that this economic community would unleash the full potential of Asean and once that is realised, it's going to be for their benefits," Surin said.

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