

**Australia Significant Partner Towards A Greater Asean - IDFR DG
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 31 (Bernama) -- The 50 years of close Malaysia-Australia ties has not only strengthened bilateral relations between the two countries but has also contributed towards the effort to further strengthen ASEAN's security, said Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) director-general Datuk Md Hussin Nayan.

He said Australia has always been a significant partner to Malaysia, as well as to the region, in terms of pushing ASEAN to move forward.

"(For example), the recent transfer of two Australian Border Protection Service vessels to the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (APMM), this will help to ensure a more cohesive, stable and peaceful region in the long run," he said when opening the ASEAN-Australia Engagement: Trends and Prospects for the Region Roundtable at the IDFR office here today.

Md Hussin also noted that Malaysia, as this year's chairman of ASEAN, would always look forward to work closely with ASEAN member states and its Dialog Partners towards making ASEAN a community that is united in peace, prosperity and stability.

The panellists for the inaugural roundtable were the Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia Rod Smith, the head of the Institute of ASEAN Studies and Global Affairs, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Datuk Dr Mohd Yusof Ahmad and the deputy director-general of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Division Jojie Samuel M C Samuel.

During the discussion, Smith, who has officially been here since January 2014, noted that Australia, through a number of its diplomatic missions, had been committed to help ensuring a peaceful, stable and prosperous environment for ASEAN.

Citing the formation of Malaysia in 1963 as an example, Smith noted that Australia had played an active role in supporting the campaign (formation of Malaysia).

He also pointed out that Australia had also helped to facilitate independence for some of the ASEAN countries, as the region had the dynamics, and the potential needed to move forward, especially in term of economics.

Smith also noted that Australia has been significantly contributing to the development of ASEAN via various programmes based in ASEAN's three key pillars, namely the political-security community, economic community and socio-cultural community.

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