

Malaysia Determined In Meeting Global Economic Challenges, Says Muhyiddin Bernama

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From Jamaluddin Muhammad

MILAN, May 8 (Bernama) -- In facing the current global economic environment, Malaysia is determined to meet its challenges and do what is necessary to ensure sustained growth, says Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

The deputy prime minister said the nation would not rest on its laurels despite the fact that the country's economic fundamentals were strong, underpinned by comfortable levels of external reserves, low external debt, low unemployment and healthy inflow of foreign direct investments.

"But, having said that, we are not about to bury our heads in the sand and wait for the storm to pass," he said at the opening of the Malaysia Pavilion at the Expo Milano 2015 in Milan, Friday.

He pointed out that the downward revision in global economic growth coupled with the fall in crude oil prices and the lacklustre performance of the commodities sector would surely have an impact on the country's growth.

"We expect to grow steadily between 4.5 and 5.5 per cent despite the global economic environment," Muhyiddin said, adding that Malaysia recorded a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of six per cent last year.

He said the business community in the European Union is confident Malaysia was ready to expand its relations with the grouping - be it in people-to-people connectivity or in trade and investment.

Malaysia, he said, attracted US\$68 billion (about RM244 billion) in both foreign and domestic investments last year.

Muhyiddin said the services and manufacturing sectors, continued to play their leading role, accounting for 63.4 per cent and 30.5 per cent, respectively, towards approved investments in 2014.

He said in terms of trade, Malaysia's total trade expanded two per cent to about US\$445 billion (about RM1.6 trillion) last year compared with about US\$435 billion (about RM1.5 trillion) in 2013.

Citing Malaysia's policies in this field, he said the success of the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) and the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) could be seen in the country's trade and investment numbers.

In drawing further attention to the matter, Muhyiddin said Malaysia was ranked the 12th

most competitive nation and 18th easiest place to do business last year.

He drove home the point that Malaysia was assuming the Chair of the 10 member ASEAN grouping comprising Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam and also intended to establish the ASEAN Community by Dec 31.

"As a single market, ASEAN is the seventh largest economy in the world, home to a consumer market of more than 600 million people with a combined GDP higher than US\$2 trillion (RM7 trillion)," Muhyiddin said.

The deputy prime minister added that ASEAN economies were posting an annual average growth of more than five per cent and per capita income was averaging US\$3,800 (RM1.3 million), leading to a growing middle class with increased disposable income.

"The establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community at the end of this year sends a powerful signal that ASEAN is committed to market liberalisation and the facilitation of trade and investment," he said.

Referring to the Malaysia Pavilion themed, 'Towards A Sustainable Food Ecosystem', he said the overarching message of sustainable, inclusive, innovative and technological development were the basis for the pavilion's design.

It reflects the nation's rich biodiversity, comprising virgin jungles, beautiful islands, cool highlands and an eco-system that nurtures many unique flora and fauna to thrive.

The 2,047 square metre pavilion consisting of a structure of four seeds is a symbol of growth, signifying the beginning of a journey and the potential within, said Muhyiddin.

He said the pavilion's seed-shaped structure was constructed with 'Glulam', a glue-laminated timber, an innovative structural timber made of Malaysian sustainable materials.

While showcasing various aspects of Malaysia's diversity, the promotion of trade and investment would also be a major highlight of the events at the pavilion.

He said several on-site networking events, business matching and also off-site forums and seminars have been scheduled throughout the six months expo which started on May 1.

"Among the sectors we are focusing on are green technology, energy, manufacturing and services," he said.

Malaysia is one of the 148 countries participating in the world expo, themed 'Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life', aimed at promoting food security and technology.

It is expected to attract about 20 million visitors including trade visitors.

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