

#ASEAN: Muhyiddin Underscores Two Guiding Principles To Move ASEAN Forward
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 25 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said that in bringing ASEAN forward, it should be guided by two principles - one of them the need to move towards a greater rules-based organisation.

He said this would allow the 10-member grouping to rely on the objective application of regulations, norms and dispute settlement mechanisms that were compatible with the system of international law.

"The ASEAN Charter adopted in 2008 was our first major step in this direction. There are more steps to take," he said when addressing ASEAN foreign and economic ministers at a joint welcoming dinner here tonight in conjunction with the 26th ASEAN Summit scheduled for April 26 and 27.

At the event, Muhyiddin also launched the Commemorative Coin in conjunction with Malaysia's chairmanship of ASEAN this year.

Muhyiddin noted that ASEAN did not seek a one-size-fits-all formula as it moved forward.

"Indeed, we neither seek uniformity nor a supra-national ASEAN government.

Instead, we celebrate our diversity, convinced of its attributes and in strengthening unity among us," he said.

On the second guiding principle that touched on ASEAN centrality, Muhyiddin said the grouping could stand proud of its achievements, and its undeniable and growing influence.

Despite this, he reminded the audience on the need for ASEAN to fortify its resilience and increase its effectiveness as an organisation.

"The geo-political shifts in the region and in the wider world are indeed real and it's felt by all. It's in how we respond to them that shall determine our future," he said.

Muhyiddin pointed out that Malaysia took the responsibility of being the 2015 ASEAN chair seriously, mindful that it could only be discharged through collective effort and close coordination among member states

"Most importantly, we must keep to the spirit of ASEAN," he said, mentioning the task of developing ASEAN's post-2015 Vision.

"It will form our regional roadmap for the next 10 years and set the tone for developments beyond. I trust this work is in full swing," he said.

ASEAN groups Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

On the proposal to establish a common time zone for ASEAN capitals, Muhyiddin said Malaysia believed that the time for this initiative was now.

He said that such a move would stand to benefit all the region's markets with financial gains to be had.

The creation of the "we feeling" among the people of ASEAN would result in more solidarity, a boost in tourism and contribute significantly towards greater regional unity overall, he said.

"Further, we should take advantage of our location close to the second - and soon the premier - economy of the world by aligning ourselves with its time zone," Muhyiddin said, referring to economic powerhouse China.

Nevertheless, Muhyiddin said Malaysia was fully mindful that such a move would involve relatively significant upheaval, particularly to people's daily lives.

"Malaysia went through this process more than 30 years ago; it took a bit of convincing but we can attest that the benefits it brings far surpass the initial upheaval and discomfort," the deputy prime minister said.

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