

Redouble Efforts For Successful ASEAN Community, Najib Urges Member States
Bernama
Nov 22, 2015

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 22 (Bernama) -- Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has called on ASEAN member states to redouble their efforts to create a successful ASEAN Community, a declaration on the formation of which was inked by the ASEAN leaders here Sunday.

"For the coming into being of the ASEAN Community does not mean that we have arrived at the end of the region-building process.

"Now the hard work of fully uniting and integrating under the three pillars of the Community has to be redoubled," said Najib, the chairman of ASEAN 2015, when closing the 27th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits here.

Najib said the achievement and the establishment of the ASEAN Community, comprising the political-security, economic and socio-cultural pillars, could not happen overnight.

"This is why we are giving ourselves the space and time to achieve these goals, and have set 2025 as the target," he said, adding that the ASEAN Community would begin this new journey on Jan 1, 2016.

Najib pointed out that the ASEAN leaders were serious on the implementation of the ASEAN Community (2009-2015) with various plans and programmes having been put in place.

"ASEAN ministers, the ASEAN secretary-general and all ASEAN organs are tasked with mobilising the necessary resources to ensure that the steps we have agreed to take are put into action.

"The secretary-general will monitor progress and report annually to the ASEAN Summit. Our aim is to build an outward-looking Community that plays a responsible and constructive role globally," he said.

Sharing his thoughts, Najib said this Community should be resilient, peaceful, secure and responsive to the needs of their peoples and the common good which would be founded on fundamental freedoms and social justice.

He said the Community should also embrace the values of tolerance and moderation and share a strong sense of togetherness, common identity and destiny.

"That is no small ambition. I am confident, however, that together we will achieve this.

"And, together, we will deliver on our pledges to further improve the lives of the peoples of ASEAN, and to realise an ASEAN that is truly of the people, and for the people," Najib said.

On Malaysia's chairmanship of ASEAN this year, Najib said ASEAN had maintained its resolve to promote regional peace and security through moderation, dialogue and constructive exchanges.

Touching on the economic front, Najib said ASEAN has had an impressive economic growth over the last 10 years, and despite the difficulties facing the global economy, this region was still expected to post a very healthy growth rate of 4.9 per cent next year.

"We have strengthened the bonds of our brotherhood by coming to each other's aid when human or natural disasters have struck. And we have set ASEAN on a path that should see our Community become the fourth largest economy in the world within the coming decades.

"None of this would have been possible without the commitment and continuous support from all ASEAN member states, as well as from our dialogue partners," he said.

Najib drove home the point that ASEAN had proved to the world that this bloc of nations can be Asia-Pacific's most competitive regional grouping and an emerging force on the international stage.

The Malaysian prime minister then handed over the chairmanship of ASEAN to Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong of Laos.

"I trust that under your able leadership, the ASEAN Community will continue to prosper, and I assure you of Malaysia's unwavering support during your chairmanship next year," he said.

Besides the establishment of the ASEAN Community, the ASEAN leaders today also inked the 'Kuala Lumpur Declaration on ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together', a document charting the way forward for the community over the next 10 years.

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