

## **PM Outlines 6 Strategies to Drive Exports**

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PUTRAJAYA, Feb 25 (Bernama) -- A special focus will be put on the adoption of e-commerce by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to drive the country's exports, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The measure, one of six strategies agreed to at the National Export Council (NEC) meeting here today, will include the introduction of the eTRADE programme by the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) under the Digital Malaysia initiative and coordinated by the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC).

He said the eTRADE programme will enable SMEs to market their products globally through platforms such as Alibaba.com, eBay, Amazon.com, TradeIndia, TMall.com and JD.com.

"The government targets SMEs' contribution to exports to rise to 23 per cent from the current 19 per cent," he said in a statement after chairing the NEC's first meeting of the year here today.

The NEC, comprising 11 members from the public sector and seven from the private sector, is tasked with ensuring the country's export situation remains positive amid global challenges.

Also present at the meeting were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed.

Najib, who is also Finance Minister, said the second strategy involves MATRADE spurring more mid-tier companies to become regional and global export champions.

"This would create more Malaysian multi-national companies," he said.

Najib said the NEC also agreed that Malaysia's brand promotion would be a public-private partnership under the 1Malaysia Promotion Programme.

For the fourth strategy, Najib said MATRADE, as the national export promotion agency, would diversify export markets to include China's tier-2 and tier-3 cities, greenfield markets in ASEAN, Trans-Pacific Partnership member countries, Africa and the Middle East.

"This move would expand export opportunities for Malaysian companies, especially SMEs," he said.

The prime minister said the NEC also discussed a strategic plan to raise production as well as exports of agricultural products through a focus on Permanent Food Production Areas and Integrated Aquaculture Zones.

"The plan aims to achieve a better trade balance for agro-food products," he said.

Under the sixth strategy, Najib said, domestic tourism promotion will be boosted via integrated holiday packages to encourage more Malaysians to holiday at home, as a way of stemming money outflows and spurring domestic economic activities.

Najib stressed the importance of exports to the country's economy, saying they account for 67.4 per cent of Gross National Product (GDP).

"With Malaysia marching towards developed nation status, the contribution of exports will be even more important. A combination of current account surplus and trade surplus reflects Malaysia's sound economic fundamentals," he said.

Meanwhile, the prime minister said Malaysia's exports last year grew 1.9 per cent over the preceding year to RM779.9 billion.

"This was a commendable performance in view of the challenging economic situation that included low commodity prices, currency depreciation, and China's moderating economic growth.

"The trade balance also rose 14.3 per cent to RM94.3 billion, the 18th year in a row Malaysia has achieved a trade surplus.

"The current account also remained positive albeit at a lower level than in 2014," he added.

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