

Najib to deliver keynote address during special summit

BERNAMA

16/03/2018

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SYDNEY, March 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak is scheduled to deliver a keynote address at the closing segment of the Counter-Terrorism Conference being held in conjunction with the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit here over the weekend.

Malaysian Foreign Ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Ramlan Ibrahim said Najib was the only ASEAN leader invited to deliver a speech at the closing segment on Saturday. The other leader to address the conference will be Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull.

"This is a recognition, a great privilege and it reflects his (Najib's) authority and leadership in highlighting issues related to counter-terrorism in the region.

"Najib's firmness as a leader and Malaysia's strategy have given Australia confidence to invite him to state his vision and suggest the best approach to address the issue based on our experience and the approach we have taken," he told a media conference here Friday.

Ramlan said Najib would lead a Malaysian delegation to the special summit scheduled for Saturday and Sunday. Najib is also scheduled to attend a bilateral meeting with Turnbull on Saturday morning, before the summit.

He said the issues to be discussed were defence, education, trade and investment cooperation.

"The discussions will focus on strengthening existing bilateral relations. We have moved towards a strategic partnership. We can look at the areas of cooperation that can be

enhanced in the context of strategic bilateral relations especially on trade, investment and education, and on regional cooperation in countering terrorism," he said.

Ramlan said that after the bilateral meeting, the first programme on Najib's itinerary at the special summit would be the opening ceremony to be officiated at by Turnbull.

"It will be followed by the New Colombo Plan tea reception to allow the ASEAN heads of state and government to meet Australian students who have pursued higher studies under the plan.

"Then, all the heads of state/government will attend the closing segment of the Counter-Terrorism Conference and witness the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ASEAN and the Australian government on International Counter-Terrorism Co-operation. The ASEAN secretary-general will sign the MoU on behalf of ASEAN, witnessed by the ASEAN leaders," he said.

Ramlan said the summit was important as it sought to enhance dialogue between ASEAN and Australia.

"ASEAN and Australian leaders will endorse the Sydney Declaration in conjunction with the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit. The declaration is aimed at enhancing cooperation between ASEAN and Australia in all areas, particularly regional connectivity, trade, business, combating terrorism and enhancing people-to-people relations for regional peace, stability and prosperity.

"The declaration will also strengthen ASEAN-Australian long-term friendly relations based on common values and interests. Issues relating to the ASEAN-Australia Dialogue have also been refined at the level of the foreign ministers to finalise and highlight the interests of the countries," he said.

Ramlan said the summit would serve as an ideal platform for leaders to exchange views formally and informally, particularly on the future direction of ASEAN-Australian cooperation, combating regional terrorism, maintaining maritime and regional stability, as well as efforts to enhance ASEAN-Australian economic cooperation.

"The MoU on International Counter-Terrorism Co-operation will be a guide to efforts to combat international terrorism through various mechanisms as well as enhance the efficiency of inter-government enforcement agencies in addressing and combating international terrorism," he said.

He said the special summit would also encourage interaction among businessmen in the effort to enhance cooperation among private companies.

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