

ASEAN-Australia collaborate on smart, sustainable city development

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SYDNEY, March 18 (Bernama) -- Australia will allocate AUD30 million to help ASEAN to develop cities across Southeast Asia in smart and sustainable ways for the next five years.

The ASEAN-Australia Smart Cities initiative, announced on the final day of ASEAN-Australia Special Summit here, is to foster collaboration on smart city development and promote regional economic integration.

Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said Australia will provide training and technical assistance to build resilient and competitive communities, including through the development of an ASEAN Smart Cities Network.

She said Australia would also support efforts to advance sustainable urbanisation in ASEAN, and establish a regional urbanisation forum.

"Australia has world-class expertise to share in fields such as green infrastructure, renewable energy and data analytics. Australia has a long history of working with our close neighbours to support regional development. We look forward to working with ASEAN towards a more stable and prosperous region," she said in a statement on Sunday.

Bishop said ASEAN cities were growing at an extraordinary rate, with more than 90 million people expected to move to urban areas across Southeast Asia by 2030.

"When cities grow, so does prosperity, trade and economic growth. To harness these opportunities, cities need innovative solutions, smart planning and good governance," she said.

Meanwhile, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull in his opening remarks at the Leaders' Plenary session of the summit said the country was fully committed to backing ASEAN as the strategic convenor of the region.

"Over the past 50 years, ASEAN has used its influence to defuse tension, build peace, encourage economic cooperation and support to maintain the rule of law. The events of the past week have shown how vibrant and dynamic the ASEAN-Australia strategic partnership is."

"Our business leaders are driving economic growth and creating jobs and opportunities, our security and law enforcement agencies are keeping us safe from terrorism and other threats and working more closely together than ever and of course our students, our communities our educational, cultural and sporting institutions are engaging with and learning from each other to our mutual benefit," he said.

Turnbull said the leaders should respond with tangible initiatives for new cooperation on economic, education and security issues.

"We have a full agenda, and also a great opportunity to advance the interests, the many interests we have in common," he said.

Australia is hosting the summit for the first time.

The two-day summit which began on Saturday comprises three sessions, namely the ASEAN-Australia Leaders' Summit, the ASEAN-Australia Business Summit and the ASEAN-Australia Counter-Terrorism Conference.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak is leading the Malaysian delegation to the summit.

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