

Annual ASEAN-Australia Leaders' summits to start next year -- PM Muhyiddin

14 Nov 2020

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 14 -- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is pleased to accept Australia's proposal for the annual ASEAN-Australia Leaders' summits, starting from next year, said Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin today.

Muhyiddin, when delivering the ASEAN Common Statement at the 2nd ASEAN-Australia Biennial Summit, said the grouping is committed to working together with Australia to further expand and deepen strategic partnership in all dimensions and areas for mutual benefit towards regional and global peace, stability and prosperity.

"As reflected in the ASEAN-Australia Joint Leaders' Statement, we recognise the depth and breadth of our longstanding relationship with Australia," he said at the summit, held within the 37th ASEAN Summit and related meetings. The prime minister is the country coordinator for ASEAN-Australia Biennial Summit.

Australia was represented by Prime Minister Scott Morrison at the summit.

The summit, held virtually due to the pandemic, is chaired by Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc in his capacity as ASEAN Chair 2020 under the theme "Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN."

Australia's proposal for an annual ASEAN-Australia Leaders' summits beginning from 2021 was announced at the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Meeting Plus One with Australia in September.

Meanwhile Muhyiddin said it is timely for ASEAN and Australia to boost cooperation in areas such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), digital technologies, trade facilitation and e-commerce with the increased impetus for digital transformation due to COVID19.

ASEAN, he said, looks forward to Australia's further support for ASEAN Connectivity under the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025, including smart cities.

The prime minister also said ASEAN looks forward to strengthening collaboration on COVID-19 with Australian health officials and experts, including in research and development, sharing scientific knowledge and innovative technologies.

Muhyiddin said Australia's role in the area of health cooperation has been significantly expanded through the convening of the Special ASEAN-Australia Foreign Ministers' Meeting on COVID-19 (SAAFMM) in June 2020 and the ASEAN-Australia Health Experts' Meeting on COVID-19 last July.

He said ASEAN welcomes Australia's announcement of an AU\$23 million COVID-19 package of initiatives during SAAFFM and another AU\$60 million at the last ASEAN-Australia Ministerial Meeting in September.

ASEAN also welcomes Australia's contribution of AU\$1 million to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund and Australia's support for other ASEAN's health-related initiatives, he added.

Muhyiddin said ASEAN also thanked Australia for its long-standing commitment and constructive role in the promotion and maintenance of peace, security, stability and prosperity in the region.

He noted that ASEAN also values Australia's active engagement and collaboration with ASEAN in traditional and non-traditional security issues, and welcome Australia's support for ASEAN's Women, Peace and Security agenda.

"ASEAN encourages future discussions on this agenda and looks forward to the convening of the second ASEAN Australia Women, Peace and Security Dialogue," he said.

Australia became ASEAN's very first Dialogue Partner in 1974. The first stand-alone ASEAN-Australia Summit was held in Hanoi in October 2010.

ASEAN, established in 1967, comprises Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

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