

ASEAN MOSQUE FESTIVAL

By : YAB. DATO' SRI MOHD NAJIB BIN TUN HAJI ABDUL RAZAK, PERDANA
MENTERI MALAYSIA

Venue : PICC, Putrajaya

Date : 07/12/2015

Bismillahirrahmanirahim,

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh, and a very good afternoon to you all.

PROFESSOR JIMLY ASHIDDIQIE S.H

Ketua Dewan Kehormatan Penyelenggara Pemilu (DKPP), Indonesia

DR YOOSUF SHAN

Medical Specialist, Maldives

BAPAK HASAN BASRY

Secretary General, FORSIMAS, Indonesia

DR RISMAN MUSA

FORSIMAS, Indonesia

ALEP MYDIE

Councillor, Shire of Kattaning, West Australia

MR RANGSAN KAMSON

Imam, Thailand

DR SAEED B NOWAIFEA AL-HAZMI

Director, Muslim World League, Malaysia

YB PROFESSOR MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

Founding CEO, International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies, Malaysia

USTAZ ABDUL MUHMIN A. MUJAHID

Executive Director, Regional Darul Ifta' Cotabato City, Filipina

H.E. AIR CHIEF MARSHAL (TRD) HERMAN PRAYITNO

Ambassador, Republic of Indonesia, Malaysia

MR BOUNTHAN KOUNSONSANANG

First Secretary / DCM of The Lao PDR Malaysia

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the inaugural ASEAN Mosque Festival, or AMF. Under the theme of “Knowledge, Ukhuwah and Understanding”, AMF aims to redefine, support and enlarge on the roles of mosques in our societies; to overcome misconceptions about religions, and provide a more in-depth understanding of the different faiths that our 625 million people follow.

2. With over 240 million Muslims in ASEAN, we should be a unified congregation of the Ummah here in Southeast Asia, and speak as one to the world of the moderation and tolerance that is our heritage.
3. I need hardly tell you that in these dark times, the message that Islam is a religion of peace, justice and inclusivity needs to be spread far and wide. We are uniquely placed to do so.
4. For that is the story of Islam in our region. It is one that we must repeat, both to ourselves and to others, so that they do not fall for the falsehoods of the terrorists who blaspheme the name of Islam, and who have brought death and destruction to so many.
5. It is a story that we must actively rediscover, by relearning our history, and drawing on the unique scholarship and traditions that have been developed in our part of the world, and are still being developed today.
6. And it is a story that we should celebrate, as it is one that demonstrates how the Muslims of Southeast Asia have lived side by side, in cooperation and in harmony with the hundreds of millions of Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Confucians, Taoists and others in the lands that we share.

Ladies and gentlemen,

7. Central for all Muslims is the mosque. The ones we go to may be near our places of work, our homes, or in different parts of the country when we visit friends and family. But we should remember that historically, mosques were more than places for worship. They were also centres for education, places at

the heart of communities that helped bring people together - and not just Muslims.

8. They can and should play a valuable role in our efforts to celebrate our diversity and put into practice the Quranic injunction: “Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another.”

9. In this year that Malaysia has been chairing ASEAN, we are pleased to be able to launch an initiative that aims to empower the transformational values of the mosque, and I am confident that the AMF will make a huge difference for the good of all our peoples.

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. This initiative can also be part of a wider effort for better understanding and respect among our different faiths and ethnicities, which is why I am glad that the IKHLAS Inter-Faith Conference is a key component of this festival.

11. The conference is a multi-faith event which brings together well-known scholars from across our ten nations to speak about their religious traditions and practice.

12. It is a forum where all will meet in the spirit of tolerance, peace, cooperation and mutual appreciation, and where representatives of all the major religions can share their collective wisdom and teachings.

13. There will be opportunities to explore and to learn, and we hope that will deepen understanding and promote peaceful and joyous co-existence. There will be opportunities to challenge, and to ask some hard questions.

14. For instance, I note that one session asks the question: “Moderate Muslim: Is there such a thing?” I can assure that your short answer is “yes”! But it is good to discuss such matters, for that can only reaffirm our faith in the necessity for moderation and its absolute centrality to Islam.

15. Above all, this will be an opportunity for us to see what we all share, and to celebrate the common humanity that transcends that which could divide us.

16. That is the true spirit of ASEAN. Ten nations. Hundreds of millions. Different ethnicities and faiths. Yes, we are many. But we are also one.

Ladies and gentlemen,

17. At the recent summit in Kuala Lumpur, we signed the Declaration on the Establishment of the ASEAN Community, and we formally adopted the landmark document that will guide us over the next ten years - ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together.

18. But at the heart of Malaysia’s chairmanship of ASEAN this year has been the establishment of - and I quote: “a people-oriented, people-centred and rules-based ASEAN Community”.

19. This is one in which “all people, stakeholders and sectors of society can contribute to and enjoy the benefits from a more integrated and connected Community, encompassing enhanced cooperation in the political-security, economic and socio-cultural pillars for sustainable, equitable and inclusive development.”

20. All people. Let me emphasise that. For I think that is what this festival is really about. The members of one faith - the Muslims of ASEAN - raising and reinvigorating our houses of worship and ensuring that they are at the centre of communities, helping to promote harmony and friendship between all.

21. And scholars from all faiths gathering to debate, to share their knowledge and expertise, and to enhance the brotherhood that already exists in our ten nations.

22. The brotherhood that has brought us so far since 1967; that has brought us to the momentous step of declaring the establishment of the ASEAN Community by the end of this year; and that will be our sure companion and support as we move forward to making that Community a true reality.

23. Let me say one more thing about that Community. There are rules that we must implement, and a true single market to create; and these are important. But we must also feel that we are the ASEAN Community in our hearts. We must feel it coursing through our veins. We must make it vivid and vital for all our citizens.

24. This festival is a notable contribution to that effort, as it is concerned with something that is at the core of the vast majority of our citizens’ lives - their

faith. May I commend all who have worked so hard to organise it and all those who have come here to participate.

25. With *Bismillahi- rahmanirrahim*, it is my pleasure now to officially launch the ASEAN Mosque Festival.

Thank you.

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