



MEDIA RELEASE

49TH ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS' MEETING PASAY CITY, THE PHILIPPINES

1. The ASEAN Economic Ministers gathered for a four-day meeting in Pasay City, Manila, the Philippines to further deepen the region's economic ties.
2. The Malaysian delegation to the 49th ASEAN Economic Ministers' (AEM) Meeting and Related Meetings was led by YB Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed, Minister of International Trade and Industry.
3. Malaysia will continue to play an active role in driving the regional economic integration under the second phase of the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint, especially in championing the efforts to resolve the long-standing issues of Non-tariff Barriers (NTBs) and Non-tariff Measures (NTMs) as well as on standards and conformance.
4. During the meeting, Dato' Sri Mustapa called on ASEAN Member states to reduce the NTBs at bilateral level among themselves first, which will serve as a precursor to bigger and more coordinated efforts in resolving them at a regional level. According to study conducted by ERIA, the number of NTMs has increased from 1,634 in 2000 to 5,975 in 2015.
5. As countries develop, more stringent measures aimed at ensuring compliance of products to stringent health, sanitary and phytosanitary are expected to increase. It is important that these new measures are made transparent and should not be imposed with the intention to protect inefficient domestic industries.
6. The ASEAN Solutions for Investment, Services and Trade (ASSIST), an online platform meant for private sector to lodge complaints on cross border issues has not been fully utilized by the business community. The ASSIST was launched during the Malaysia's Chairmanship of ASEAN back in 2015. Malaysia believes that ASSIST will be an effective instrument in addressing NTBs. In this connection, there is a need to obtain private sector feedback as to why only one complaint has been lodged by the private sector.
7. On the issue of standards and conformance, ASEAN achieved one of its 2017 priorities with the signing of ASEAN Sectoral Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) for Inspection and Certification Systems on Food Hygiene for Prepared Foodstuff Product. The Minister also take note that on harmonization of technical requirements, ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality (ACCSQ) has accomplished 5 ASEAN Common Food Control Requirements (ACFCR) on prepared foodstuff, 7 ASEAN Common Technical Requirements (ACTR) on pharmaceuticals, 7 technical Guidelines on medical devices, 7 technical requirements on cosmetics, 9 technical requirements on traditional medicines, 10 technical requirements on health supplements and 16 technical requirements on automotive. Although achievements to date are commendable, it is important to intensify efforts to harmonise standards to facilitate intra-ASEAN trade.



8. The meeting acknowledged that ASEAN must be fully prepared for the transformational phase in the global economy brought about by the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR). Pursuant to this, MITI is taking the advantage of the rapid technologies and innovation developments by promoting and collaborating with various national and international organizations on digital economy.

9. Dato' Sri Mustapa also had several bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the AEM Meeting. During the bilateral meeting with Indonesia, both Ministers discussed the follow up on the outcomes of the 3rd Malaysia and Indonesia Joint Trade and Investment Committee (JTIC) held in July this year and agreed to report the progress at the upcoming Malaysia-Indonesia Annual Consultations scheduled in November 2017 in Kuching, Sarawak. Through the newly established Council of Palm Oil Producing Countries (CPOPC), both countries also agreed to strengthen cooperation in countering the negative campaign against palm oil particularly in the Europe.

10. During the bilateral meeting with Canada, Dato' Sri Mustapa was informed that ASEAN youth including Malaysians will have the opportunity to apply for scholarship to further their studies in Canada under the USD10 million Canadian Government's five-year scholarship programme.

11. In the last 50 years, Malaysia has reaped the benefits of being a member of ASEAN and will continue to work towards creating a bigger, more open and rules-based market in the region as we continue to prosper together, as one community.

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Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI)

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About MITI:

MITI is the key driver in making Malaysia the preferred destination for quality investments and enhancing the nation's rising status as a globally competitive trading nation. Its objectives and roles are oriented towards ensuring Malaysia's rapid economic development and help achieve the country's stated goal of becoming a developed nation by 2020 .

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