

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ASEAN Education Ministers Agree to Instill “ASEAN Identity of Peoples”

With a new Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) Charter in place, the ASEAN Education Ministers have agreed to realize a truly ASEAN community by using education as a means of increasing ASEAN awareness and forging an ASEAN identity among the 567 million people of Southeast Asia.

DepEd Secretary Jesli A. Lapus, Vice Chairman of the ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting, said that the fastest and most effective means towards integration is to build awareness and pride in being part of ASEAN among the young people, particularly those of school age.

“A true ASEAN Community can only be realized if the citizens of each member state feel a sense of belonging. And that can happen, if we begin building forging the ASEAN community in schools,” he said.

“We want to see an ASEAN community that emphasizes historical ties, a shared cultural heritage and the bonds of a common regional identity. An ASEAN identity would provide a sense of belonging among member states and hopefully encourage them to coordinate their policies in regard to the rest of the world,” he added.

In a meeting of the ASEAN Education Ministers in Phuket, Thailand held early this month, the Ministers agreed to develop an ASEAN Curriculum in all levels of education in the respective countries. It was also agreed to encourage the use of “The ASEAN Way,” the official anthem of ASEAN in ASEAN-related events or programs in schools and universities.

Amid the regional and global changes, ASEAN has recently embarked upon reinventing itself with the launching of new initiatives designed to prove its viability. It has formulated a planned integration of all 10 members, drawn up the ASEAN Vision 2020, which outlines a number of objectives towards regional development, and approved a new ASEAN Charter, all as part of strengthening its institutional structures.

Besides integrating ASEAN into their respective national curriculum, the Ministers also agreed that the other ingredients to build a true ASEAN community could include greater collaboration between ASEAN governments and their respective citizens in defining a regional identity. And since the expression of an identity is collective by nature, a greater role for civil society is quintessential, as that would symbolize a regional identity that is people-based and not emanating solely on state authority.

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