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ASEAN Digital Library Key To Equitable, Inclusive Knowledge Access – Aaron

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KUALA LUMPUR, June 17 (Bernama) -- National Unity Minister Datuk Aaron Ago Dagang has called on ASEAN member states to accelerate their participation in the ASEAN Digital Library (ADL), describing it as a crucial step toward equitable and inclusive access to knowledge across the region.

He said the ADL is among the most promising and forward-looking regional initiatives, demonstrating what can be achieved when ASEAN nations come together with a shared commitment to preserving, sharing and democratising knowledge.

"The ASEAN Digital Library is a collaborative digital platform that aggregates metadata from the national libraries of ASEAN member states.



"While the system is still expanding, it already enables seamless cross-border access to tens of thousands of digitised materials, including rare manuscripts, books, cultural artefacts, images, newspapers, and more," he said in his opening remarks at the 19th Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians General Conference and

"While the system is still expanding, it already enables seamless cross-border access to tens of thousands of digitised materials, including rare manuscripts, books, cultural artefacts, images, newspapers, and more," he said in his opening remarks at the 19th Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians General Conference and Meeting (CONSAL XIX), launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, today.

Aaron said to maximise ADL's potential, member states must invest in shared digital infrastructure, strengthen capacity-building for librarians and archivists, and adopt interoperable metadata standards to enable smoother integration of national collections.

He also emphasised the need for bold efforts in supporting the digitisation of indigenous knowledge systems and local languages to ensure that the region's digital archives reflect the full spectrum of ASEAN's rich and diverse heritage.

Meanwhile, Aaron said inclusive access to knowledge must be at the heart of nation-building, especially in rural and underserved communities.

"In building knowledge-based societies, we must ensure that no one is excluded, whether due to geography, economic status, age, gender, ability or language," he said, adding that true inclusivity means the benefits of education and information must reach every corner of society.

This includes expanding outreach efforts such as mobile libraries, digital kiosks and alternative service models which act as lifelines for learning, particularly for children, farmers, women and the elderly in rural areas.

CONSAL XIX is a triennial event that brings together 1,200 participants from across ASEAN member states and beyond, with 89 insightful papers presented by renowned speakers and experts from various disciplines.

Throughout the congress, a wide array of topics are discussed, including the emerging role of libraries in fostering inclusive communities, the contribution of libraries toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and strategies to expand knowledge ecosystems for marginalised groups, including persons with disabilities and rural populations.

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