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Asean-Abdullah

MALAYSIA TO BRING UP MEKONG VALLEY ISSUE AT ASEAN SUMMIT

JAKARTA, Nov 29 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will brief Asean leaders on the Mekong Basin Development Cooperation, including the Trans-Asia railway link project, at their inaugural informal summit here with a view to getting their approval to expedite its implementation, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would draw the attention of his Asean counterparts and leaders from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, on the two issues.

"There would be decisions taken on the Mekong Basin," he told Malaysian journalists on arrival here today, ahead of the one-day Asean Informal Summit tomorrow.

The so-called "no fixed agenda" summit will be attended by leaders of Asean and the three Indochinese countries.

Abdullah said the development projects proposed for the Mekong Basin will get off the ground after the leaders have given their endorsement.

Malaysia was given the task of preparing the working paper on the proposed development of the Mekong Valley and also to coordinate the proposed Trans-Asia railway link from Singapore to China.

Dr Mahathir has said that Malaysia will conduct studies to identify development projects which could be implemented in the Mekong Basin. Among the possible projects are development of water resources like irrigation and hydroelectric power generation and tourism.

The Greater Mekong Subregion covers an area of about 2.3 million sq km, encompassing six countries -- Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and Yunan province of China.

On the Trans-Asia railway link, Malaysia has recommended four routes that would take the shortest time to complete under a RM2 million feasibility study.

On the summit, Abdullah said apart from an indicative list of topics to be forwarded to the leaders, there would not be a structured agenda for them to discuss.

He said it would be up to the leaders to discuss anything and make decisions on issues which were regarded as important.

The foreign minister said the leaders would then direct their respective ministers to follow up on their decisions.

"It is like a buffet of subjects. The masters have decided on the menu and the cook will start cooking," he quipped.

Abdullah said Asean leaders are also expected to make "some decisions" on the United States' Extra-Territorial Act which penalises foreign companies investing in Iran and Libya accused by Washington of supporting terrorism.

"And we like it (the decisions) to be an Asean statement, a common statement where we say it collectively," he said.

On the timing of Myanmar's entry into Asean, Abdullah said Malaysia felt that if Yangon has already fulfilled the requirements, there is no reason for Myanmar not to join the grouping next year.

Describing Myanmar as a "hot issue", he said Kuala Lumpur will not see it as a problem if Myanmar has not met all the requirements and could not join the Asean fold next year.

Abdullah said other issues to be discussed by the leaders would include the World Trade Organisation and the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free

Zone treaty which was endorsed at the last Asean summit. -- BERNAMA  
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