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US-Policy

ASEAN AND SOUTHEAST ASIA TO RECEIVE ADEQUATE ATTENTION, SAYS DON

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 25 (Bernama) -- The United States, under President Bill Clinton's second term, is expected to give "adequate attention" to Asean and other Southeast Asian countries, a US foreign policy expert said today.

Frederick Z. Brown of John Hopkins University said that although the foreign policy recently announced by State Secretary Madeleine Albright did not classify Southeast Asia as its main concern, the region would remain important to the US as countries of West Asia, China or Japan.

Asean and the countries in the region are doing well on their own and able to address economic and security matters in their own ways, he said during a Worldnet Interactive Dialogue on the second Clinton Administration and Southeast Asia at the US Embassy here.

The panel speakers from Kuala Lumpur were Prof Dr Stephen Leong of the Institute for Strategic and International Studies (Isis) and Prof Dr K.S. Nathan of Universiti Malaya. Other speakers were from Manila and Jakarta.

Brown said Albright's failure to mention Southeast Asia in her statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last January would not mean that the region is less important than the others.

Brown, who is the founder of the Southeast Asia Studies Programme at the university's School of Advanced International Studies, said that Albright would prove the US interest in the Southeast Asian region by her upcoming visit here in July.

On the Asean-10 and the issue of Myanmar's membership into the fold, he said the US would not impose any veto power over the matter and would respect Asean's "different ways of achieving consensus".

A speaker from Jakarta asked Brown whether the future successors of leading Asean countries such as President Suharto and Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would be able to continue the present stability in the region.

To that, he said that the future leaders would be capable in maintaining Asean's spirit and goodwill.

The role of the US in the region is not in coaching its activities or even to bet on another horse and thus, it would continue to be an important partner in bilateral relationships with the countries, he added. -- BERNAMA

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