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Summit-Currency

INDONESIA AND THAILAND WANT SEPARATE STATEMENT ON CURRENCY

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 13 (Bernama) -- Indonesia and Thailand, which have been badly stung by the currency turmoil, want a separate statement to be issued on the problem at the second Asean informal summit here on Monday.

Thai Foreign Ministry economic director-general Kobsak Chutikul said it was proposed that the statement be a mix of "general views and specific measures".

He said Thailand supported such a statement because the financial turmoil was a problem felt by the people.

"Leaders cannot come to some international meeting without talking about it," he told reporters after the senior officials meeting (SOM) to finalise preparations for the three-day summit dubbed the Commemorative Summit in view of the grouping's 30th anniversary.

"It is important to work out this financial problem first before we can talk about our vision 2020 which will proceed despite the situation," he said.

Asean groups Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea are the three Asian countries that have sought financial aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) since the currency turmoil was triggered in July when the Thai baht was floated.

Indonesia's Foreign Ministry politics director-general Nugroho Wisnumurti said Indonesia supported coming out with the special statement.

"We are working on it," said Nugroho as he underlined Indonesia's hope that the statement would be a reality and would be an Asean effort that would not be bound to any other parties.

Speaking at a news conference, Malaysia's Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamad, who chaired the SOM, said the question of the statement would be left to the eight leaders attending the summit to be chaired by Malaysia's Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Indonesia's President Suharto has cancelled his trip here on his doctors' advice.

The currency turmoil is again expected to dominate discussions among the Asean leaders and at the inaugural Asean summit with China, Japan and South Korea, also on Monday.

Abdul Kadir said it was hoped that the outcome of the deliberations on the currency issue would restore confidence in the region.

He also said that Japanese senior officials did not reveal the reported assistance by Japan to assist stricken Asean economies because it would be announced by their Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto.

The senior officials met overtime to finalise drafts for the chairman's statement and also the joint statements that would be issued after the bilateral meetings between Asean and China, Japan and South Korea. --

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