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Asean-Spratly

MALAYSIA TO GET ASEAN'S VIEWS ON CHINA'S PROPOSAL ON SPRATLY ISLANDS

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 26 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will get Asean's views on China's proposal that the Spratly islands be jointly developed by the countries making overlapping claims, at the Asean informal summit to be held here in December.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi said today Malaysia felt it was only proper that China's offer be conveyed to the summit because the claims involved four of the nine-Asean members, namely, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei. The other claimants are China and Taiwan.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Malaysia's decision at a Malaysia-Brunei delegates meeting at the Prime Minister's Department, here, today. The meeting was in conjunction with the sultan's four-day visit to Malaysia.

"As the prime minister said, we need to talk to the other Asean nations in view that Asean and the other Asean nations involved had played an important role.

"The overlapping claims need not be between us and China only, sometimes three or four countries are involved. So we do not want to decide on the matter first because it involves other friends who also face problems and are making the overlapping claims, he told reporters after the meeting.

Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng, during a visit here recently, acknowledged that it would take a long time for the countries involved to settle the overlapping claims to the Spratly islands fairly.

In view that the claimants had other priorities and that China did not want the issue to hinder its relations with other countries, especially Asean, Li Peng proposed that they jointly develop the islands.

Abdullah said Malaysia had not responded to China's views because Kuala Lumpur respected the other claimants.

The problem was related to the situation in the South China Sea and stability in the region and he felt that the Asean countries would understand China's stand on the matter, he said.

Sultan Hassanal stated that he understood Dr Mahathir's views on China's stand, he added.

He said Dr Mahathir also informed the sultan of Malaysia's stand on the speculative attacks on the currencies of Malaysia and several other Asean members.

The prime minister said he would express Malaysia's and several other countries' firm stand on such criminal acts at the World Bank-International Monetary Fund meetings in Hong Kong next month, he added.

The two leaders (Malaysia-Brunei) agreed to exchange information on similar activities and to look for ways to jointly tackle the problem, he said.

Abdullah said Malaysia and Brunei also agreed on the need for concerted efforts among the Asean nations to tackle the problem. -- BERNAMA

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