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Asean-Summit

SECOND ASEAN INFORMAL SUMMIT TO BE HELD AMID REGION'S ECONOMIC SETBACKS

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 8 (Bernama) -- Asean leaders will meet for their second informal summit here next week amid the region's on-going efforts to grapple with its economic problems which surfaced after speculative attacks on some regional currencies.

Officials said the gathering, to be presided by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, was all the more significant as the nine Asean heads of state and government would also meet with leaders from China, Japan, and South Korea, Asean's traditional investment and trading partners.

Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamad said no formal agenda had been fixed for the informal summit which would also be known as the Asean Commemorative Summit celebrating 30 years of the establishment of Asean.

"But the summit is a very important one as it comes at a period when some countries in Southeast Asia face the effects of currency devaluation on their economies," he said at a media briefing on the informal summit here, today.

Although no agenda has been outlined, officials expect the leaders to review decisions taken at the first informal summit (in Jakarta) and prepare for the Asean meeting with China, Japan and South Korea -- the Asean Plus 3 -- and the globalisation process.

The informal summit will kick off on Sunday night with an informal working dinner followed by the summit proper on Monday. The Asean Plus 3 inaugural summit will also be held on Monday while bilateral meetings between Asean and the three countries are scheduled for Tuesday.

Abdul Kadir said Asean finance ministers who met in Kuala Lumpur recently would submit a written presentation to the Asean leaders on the outcome of that meeting which strengthened the region's resolve to deal with the economic setbacks.

The foreign ministers of Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines who have been charged with determining Asean's role to bring back peace in Cambodia, are also expected to brief the leaders on the latest development there.

Cambodia's admission into the grouping during the 30th Asean Ministerial Meeting here last July was deferred due to political problems in that country but the induction of Laos and Myanmar took place as scheduled.

On the Asean Plus 3 meeting, Abdul Kadir said: "I would expect the meeting will discuss ways to re-establish confidence in this region as Asean Plus 3 relations are based on mutual support and mutual prosperity."

Asean officials, he said, hoped issues such as prospects for East Asia in the 21st century, cooperation towards regional economic stability, preparations for the second Asia-Europe meeting in London in April and further collaboration in the Mekong Basin would be discussed.

He said that during the summit, the Asean foreign ministers would also sign a memorandum of understanding for the establishment of the Asean Foundation, aimed at accelerating intra-Asean cooperation in various fields such as education.

Asean comprises Brunei, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Laos, Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. -- BERNAMA

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