

08 DEC 1998
Asean-Officials
ASEAN OFFICIALS MEET IN HANOI TODAY

By: E Sivabalan

HANOI, Dec 8 (Bernama) -- Asean's senior foreign and economic officials began meeting separately here today to prepare the agenda for their respective ministers as the group moves a step closer to unite all 10 Southeast Asian countries.

They will prepare the groundwork for the Asean Ministerial Meeting (AMM) and the Asean Economic Ministers (AEM) comprising the foreign ministers and the economic ministers respectively.

Malaysia's delegation to today's Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) is led by Foreign Ministry secretary-general Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamad.

International Trade and Industry Ministry deputy secretary-general Datuk Dr Adenan Jalil leads the Malaysian side to the Senior Economic Officials Meeting (SEOM).

Officials said with Cambodia regaining its United Nations seat, Asean was all set to welcome Phnom Penh into the 31-year-old "club", possibly at its foreign and economic ministers meeting here on Saturday ahead of the Dec 15-16 Sixth Asean Summit.

Cambodia's readmission to the world body would strengthen her chances of being inducted into Asean in Vietnam which is hosting the summit for the first time since becoming a member in 1995.

Today's senior foreign and economic officials meeting would focus on Cambodia's admission into Asean which many member states had described as "long overdue."

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

Asean directors-general also began their discussions at the Asean Standing Committee (ASC) meeting today.

The ASC is the policy arm and organ of coordination of Asean between the AMM.

Their two-day meeting will be followed by the Joint Consultative Meeting (JCM) which comprises the Asean secretary-general (Rodolfo C. Severino), SOM, SEOM and the Asean directors-general.

The JCM facilitates the intersectoral coordination of Asean activities at the official level. The Asean secretary-general reports the results of the meeting directly to the AMM and AEM.

The AMM and AEM will convene on Saturday followed by the Joint Ministerial Meeting the next day.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz will represent Malaysia at the AMM and AEM respectively.

Asean leaders, including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, are expected to arrive here on Monday.

The two-day summit will kick off on Tuesday at the International Conference Centre and will end with the adoption of the Hanoi Plan of Action and the Hanoi Declaration.

The Asean heads of state and government are also scheduled to meet with leaders of China, Japan and South Korea.

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