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Asean-Declaration (Political)

ASEAN TO FORGE CONSTRUCTIVE TIES WITH MAJOR POWERS

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HANOI, Dec 11 (Bernama) -- Asean leaders are expected to sign the Hanoi Declaration at next week's Sixth Asean Summit, calling for long-term ties with major powers but with conditions including opposing any form of interference in the internal affairs of member nations.

The other conditions include a relationship that is based on equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit, according to the draft of the declaration which will be issued at the end of the Hanoi summit on Dec 16.

The leaders will welcome efforts to forge "constructive relationship" with the major powers.

The grouping will also enhance its dialogue partnership and cooperation with other countries as well as with regional and international organisations on those conditions.

Several Asean countries have recently expressed concern over the actions by some major powers for allegedly interfering in their domestic affairs.

The most recent case was when United States Vice President Al Gore expressed his support for the anti-government "Reform" movements in Malaysia and Indonesia.

There were also concerns expressed by some Asean countries over the statement by the commander in chief of the US Pacific command, Admiral Joseph Prueher who suggested early this month that Asean countries reassess their commitment of non-interference in each others' affairs.

He also irked them when he said although Washington was committed to seeing "sovereignty issues being solved peacefully", it "would be involved only if freedom of navigation becomes an issue" in Asean countries.

In a move to strengthen inter-Asean relationship and regional security, Asean leaders will "fortify confidence in our nations by continuing to maintain friendly relations among us and fostering the security of our region."

Toward this end, they will expedite the ratification of the Second Protocol to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia to enable non-regional states to accede to the treaty at the earliest possible time.

The leaders will also agree to intensify the consultations with the nuclear-weapons state with a view to their accession to the protocol to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone.

They will reiterate their pledge to resolve outstanding problems and prevent the emergence of disputes in the "Asean way" and in accordance with international law and practice.

On the overlapping claims over the Spratly Islands in South China Sea, the leaders will promote efforts to settle the disputes by peaceful means in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and in the spirit of the Asean Declaration on the South China Sea.

The Asean leaders will also continue to cooperate and strengthen Asean's capacity in science and technology, particularly in the field of Information Technology by developing the Asean Information Infrastructure.

They will also call for the strengthening and promotion of linkages among Asean institutional mechanisms in fighting against drug abuse and trafficking in order to eradicate drug production, processing, trafficking and use by the year 2020.

The Asean leaders who will sign the declaration are Brunei's Sultan

Hassanal Bolkiah, Indonesian President B.J.Habibie, Laotian Prime Minister Sisavath Keobounphanh, Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Myanmar Prime Minister Gen Than Shwe, Philippine President Joseph Estrada, Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai and Vietnam's Prime Minister Phan Van Khai.

The theme of this year's summit is "Unity and Cooperation for an Asean of Peace, Stability and Equitable Development".

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