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`Troika' concept to be deliberated at next week's ministerial meeting

Kamarulzaman Salleh in Bangkok

SENIOR Asean officials have adopted the "troika" concept to be deliberated by foreign ministers at the 33rd Asean Ministerial Meeting/Post Ministerial Conference beginning this Monday.

Foreign Ministry secretary-general Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamad told a briefing for the Malaysian Press that the concept paper on the matter had been adopted during the Asean Standing Committee and Senior Officials Meeting yesterday.

It was attended by top foreign officials from 10 member nations.

The establishment of the troika, proposed by Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai at last year's summit in Manila, is to respond to issues and developments that threaten Asean stability and security.

According to Abdul Kadir, the Asean troika will be constituted as a formal forum "as and when the situation warrants", but will not be institutionalised.

It was introduced in 1997 following the political upheaval in Cambodia during which the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia brokered a political settlement.

The troika is among the agenda highlighted for discussion by the foreign ministers during the AMM/PMC.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar will lead the Malaysian delegation at the meeting.

He will also participate in the Asean Regional Forum - a security meeting - involving Asean members, the United States, European Union countries, Canada, Australia, China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Russia, India, Mongolia and Papua New Guinea.

North Korea will be attending the ARF for the first time.

Other matters on the agenda of the AMM/PMC include the "Asean + 3 Meeting", which for the first time will involve Asean foreign ministers and their counterparts from China, Japan and Korea.

Abdul Kadir said the grouping was expected to strengthen economic and social co-operation as proposed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who floated the idea of East Asia Economic Caucus in 1990, comprising Asean, Japan, South Korea and China.

He also said the AMM would endorse a move against having any informal summits of Asean.

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