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AMM-Syed Hamid

MALAYSIA FULLY SUPPORTS "ASIAN+3" CONCEPT

By: Zainab Mohd Yatim

BANGKOK, July 23 (Bernama) -- Malaysia fully supports the meeting of the Asian plus three (Asean+3), a grouping of the Asean member countries and China, Japan and South Korea.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Syed Jaafar Albar said, "We are happy with the Asean+3...it will play an important role. Even if we do not call it East Asian Economic Group (EAEG), it will still an East Asian cooperation."

He was responding to a question on whether the Asean+3 will become EAEG when approached by reporters after having a bilateral meeting with his counterpart, the Philippines secretary of foreign affairs, Domingo L. Siazon.

The EAEG was proposed by Malaysia's Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, a decade ago.

The bilateral trade meeting between the two foreign ministers was held today in conjunction with 33rd Asean Ministerial Meeting (AMM), beginning tomorrow until July 29.

Earlier Syed Hamid had a similar meeting with Thailand minister of foreign affairs Dr Surin Pitsuwan, who is also the chairman of Asean.

During the bilateral meeting with Syed Hamid, Surin said that they had discussed on cross boarder issue.

He said, "Malaysia has been very helpful in training Thai people on technical areas."

Meanwhile, Asean secretary general Rodolfo C. Severino, at a briefing on the upcoming AMM's meeting said that ministers will discuss on Asean Troika "prominently" as well as the situation in Indonesia and South China, particularly on matters of security progress on regional code of conduct.

"Relatively, stability of the region has been very important factor in the rapid growth which Asean achieved in 1998," he said.

To a question, he said, Asean fully supports the territorial integrity of Indonesia, saying, "Indonesia is a very important member and any threat to its territorial integrity should be considered seriously."

He also said the meeting would accelerate the implementation of the Asean Free Trade Area (AFTA).

He pointed out that e-Asean initiatives would also be highlighted, saying, "the macro economic trend in the region of Asean is also aware that process of globalisation, coupled with the advances in information, communications and technology (ICT) presents Asean with unprecedented challenges in terms of competitiveness".

Asked on whether issues on Islamic extremists in the Philippines and Malaysia will be discussed, he said that there is no limitation in discussing issues on regional security.

-- BERNAMA

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