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Dialogue partners to strengthen ties

CHINA, South Korea and Japan acknowledge Asean as an important forum and will continue efforts to strengthen bilateral relations.

"Asean's relations with its dialogue partners are important for it to achieve its objectives," Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said last night.

In fact, he added, their (China, South Korea and Japan) assistance is formalised in the implementation of Asean's priorities and the Hanoi Plan of Action.

Syed Hamid was speaking to the media after attending the Asean+3 forum.

The forum is widely seen as the realisation of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's East Asia Economic Caucus proposal.

Syed Hamid said South Korean Foreign Minister Han Seung Soo briefed the meeting on the situation in the Korean peninsula, particularly the ongoing discussions between North and South Korea, which he said were on the right track.

China, he added, represented by Foreign Minister Tang Xian Xuan, also called for greater co-operation in science and technology and agriculture.

"The +3 (China, South Korea and Japan) feels that together with Asean, they can contribute towards a common position for East Asia," he said.

And, this common position, Syed Hamid said would provide a voice in the international arena on numerous issues.

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