

Charter ready by next summit

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Panel confident 10 months is enough time

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CEBU CITY (Philippines): It is only 10 months to the next Asean Summit but the task force assigned to formulate the Asean Charter will have it drawn up in time for the meeting.

Task force member Tan Sri Ahmad Fuzy Abdul Razak said his group would be "working round-the-clock" to have the charter ready when the Asean leaders convene again in November, this time in Singapore.

"Usually the summit is held in December, but this time, it has been scheduled for November, so we have only 10 months to work on it.

"Nevertheless, we are confident that it will be ready," he said when met yesterday.

At the 2005 Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Asean leaders had agreed on the establishment of the charter and had assigned the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to submit recommendations.

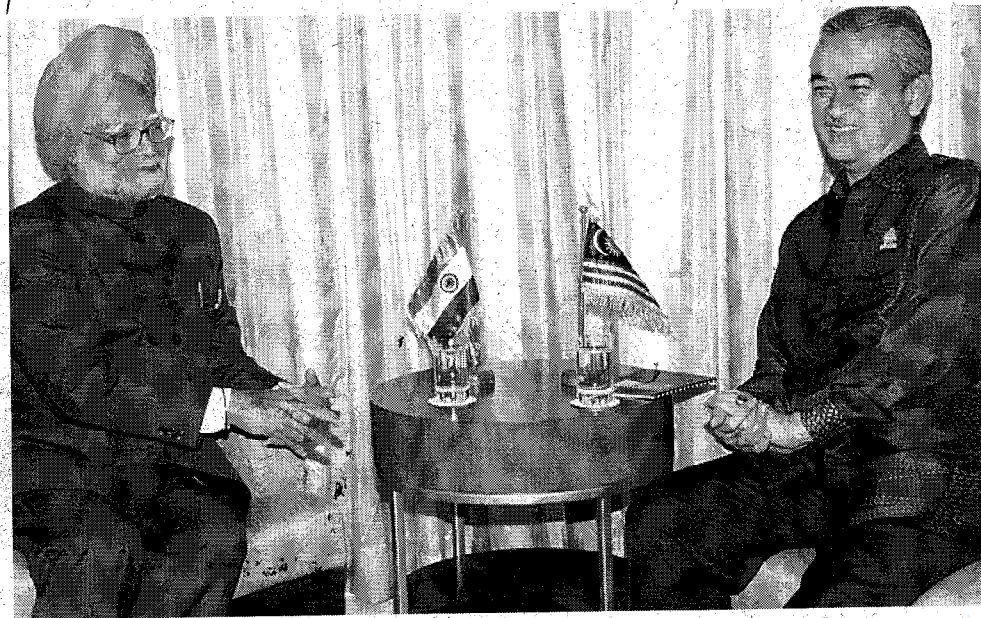
The high-level task force got down to work and met on Saturday night, just a day after the EPG had presented its recommendations to the leaders.

Apart from Ahmad Fuzy, who is Malaysia's ambassador-at-large, the task force comprises nine members, one from each of the other Asean members.

The EPG's recommendations for the charter cover several main areas: principles and basic objectives, formulation of an Asean community, mobilisation of workforce, closing the development gap, compliancy and responsibility, effective organisation, effective decision-making process and towards a people-oriented Asean.

In terms of compliance, members will be required to adhere to decisions and agreements made by the grouping or face "some sort of penalty."

Ahmad Fuzy said a follow-up meeting of the task force would be held in Jakarta early next month.



Cordial exchange: Manmohan (left) and Abdullah having frank discussions on the sidelines of the Asean Summit for half an hour. — Bernama