

Vietnam and M'sia all for peace in region

Both seek to end disputes in South China Sea



Colourful welcome: Xuan Phuc accompanying Dr Mahathir during a welcoming ceremony at the presidential palace in Hanoi. — Bernama

HANOI: Vietnam and Malaysia have agreed to work closely with other Asean members to ensure peace, stability, freedom of navigation and overflight in disputed areas in the South China Sea.

Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc said it was important to resolve disputes peacefully in accordance with international laws and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

"As two friendly neighbours in the South China Sea, we agreed to work closely with other Asean members to respect diplomatic and legal processes and to refrain from the use of force or threats and militarisation," he said at a joint press conference with Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday.

Xuan Phuc said they also agreed to fully follow the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and to achieve a substantive, effective and legally binding code of conduct (CoC).

The DOC of Parties in the South China Sea, signed by China and Asean in 2002, outlined important principles in the management of disputes in the South China Sea. In 2013, con-

sultations for the CoC were launched.

Both are aimed at safeguarding peace and stability in the region.

Meanwhile, Malaysia and Vietnam agreed to strengthen cooperation and look for new economic opportunities to reduce trade imbalances.

Both premiers also agreed to encourage investments in infrastructure, energy, high-tech agriculture, aquaculture, transport and logistics, as well as to facilitate the networking of businesses in finding new opportunities.

They also agreed to work together within Asean to make use of the economic bloc to grow their economies and tackle problems in the world and the region in particular.

On overlapping claims between the two countries, Dr Mahathir said disputes should be resolved through negotiations.

"There are many areas we agree and there are a few areas where we disagree or rather there are some disputes.

"But all these can be resolved between us in a friendly manner," he added.

Dr Mahathir said he had a very good discussion with his counterpart

during the restricted and delegation meeting yesterday.

He also invited the Vietnamese premier to visit Malaysia to continue discussions on bilateral relations.

Xuan Phuc also said he hoped to take the strategic partnership to new heights and ensure stronger growth.

He said Vietnam and Malaysia agreed to encourage Petronas and Petro Vietnam to expand cooperation in oil and gas exploration, production and supply.

"We should also put in place a suitable mechanism to enable our fishermen to engage in legal, safe and sustainable fishing, as well as find solutions together to ensure Vietnamese workers have a stable livelihood and jobs with a decent income," he added.

Earlier, both Dr Mahathir and Xuan Phuc witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Vietnam Coast Guard and Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency.