

ASEAN Leaders Want Peaceful Resolution to South China Sea Issue

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From Jamaluddin Muhammad

SUNNYLANDS (California), Feb 16 (Bernama) -- ASEAN leaders have reiterated their stand on wanting a peaceful resolution to the overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The Malaysian Prime Minister said the issue must be settled based on international laws and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

"All parties must exercise self-restraint, avoid increasing tensions in the disputed areas," he told Malaysian journalists here Monday at the end of the first day of the two-day US-ASEAN Leaders Summit.

They should also avoid issuing threats and respect the Declaration on the Conduct of parties in the South China Sea (DoC), signed by ASEAN and China in 2002, paving way for ASEAN and China to draw up the Code of Conduct (CoC) as a guideline to avoid any friction in the area, he said.

The overlapping territorial claims involve four ASEAN member states - Brunei, the Philippines, Malaysia Vietnam, as well as China and Taiwan.

Najib said he highlighted the matters during the discussions between the 10 ASEAN leaders and United States President Barack Obama, and all ASEAN leaders shared the same sentiment.

He said it was important for maintaining peace, security and stability as well as freedom of navigation and freedom of over-flight over the area.

"The solution is not directed at China alone. We need China to play its role positively and productively as any slow economic growth in China will have an impact on the global economy," he said.

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