

European Union satisfied with preparations for ASEM Summit

As the 9th ASEM Summit draws nearer, the European Union has confirmed its satisfaction with the progress made by Laos in preparing to host the event in Vientiane next November.

Chargé d'Affaires of the Delegation of the European Union to Laos, Mr Michel Goffin, was speaking to Vientiane Times during a seminar held for Lao media in Vientiane on Thursday.

He said an EU team visited Laos recently to witness the progress of the ASEM preparations so that they could send a report to their leaders advising on the situation.

"We are quite happy with the progress but there are some issues that still need to be addressed," Mr Goffin said, saying that the EU is working closely with the Lao government to push forward the progress of the preparations.

Mr Goffin was unable to comment on how much total progress had been made so far, but he noted that the construction of infrastructure for the summit remained on track.

When asked about the confirmation of attendance by leaders of the EU member states, he responded that they were expected to confirm in September.

"It is difficult for EU member states to confirm their attendance long before the event. But I'm confident that there will be strong participation from EU leaders."

Currently, leaders of many countries have confirmed their attendance at the summit in Vientiane, as well as the presidents of the European Council and European Commission.

The ASEM summit will be the largest event ever to be held in Laos and the government attaches great importance to hosting it.

The government is doing whatever it can to build and upgrade facilities necessary for the summit, including major improvements to Wattay International Airport in Vientiane, the construction of the convention centre, as well as roads, hotels and other necessary facilities.

About 4,000 people are expected to attend the summit, including a large media contingent.

The Head of Policy for Friends of Europe, Ms Shada Islam, was the lecturer at yesterday's seminar.

She said that the global economy is going to be a top issue at the ASEM9, because the issue is of great concern to both Europe and Asia.

The economic troubles and slowdown in Europe at the moment are having an impact around the globe, including in the Asean region.

"Europe needs markets in Asia but the Asian market is shrinking because they can't export to Europe. I think that it's of great concern to the leaders of both sides."

"The message of solidarity and cooperation is fully accepted. This is something that they are going to work on together to bring growth back into the global arena," Ms Islam said.

She explained that the trade and investment linkage between Asia and Europe is very strong, so joint action is necessary to overcome the crisis.

During the seminar, Ms Islam gave an overview to the media about the history of the EU and the cooperation between Asia and Europe.

She also outlined to the media about the crisis in Europe as well as the outlook of the global economy, including Asean economic integration.

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