

ISEAS Fellow Pavin Chachavalpongpun, also a Lead Researcher for Political and Strategic Affairs at the ASEAN Studies Centre, gave an interview to Bloomberg this morning (28 October 2010) on the upcoming ASEAN Summit in Hanoi.

Asked what would be the key issues/themes to be discussed at the ASEAN Summit, Pavin expected that they may include the new role in the EAS of the United States and Russia (both will be present at the meeting), a call for a tighter financial cooperation among member states in the face of economic uncertainty in the region and the world, and more importantly, issues related to regional security, ranging from the conflict in the South China Sea, the dispute between Japan and China, and perhaps the elections in Myanmar.

Pavin said that the fact that both the United States and Russia would join the EAS was an achievement in itself for ASEAN and the fact that the group would be willing to talk about contentious issues, like the South China Sea, should be perceived as a part of confidence-building in the region.

As for the issue of the South China Sea, generally, anxiety could be felt among ASEAN claimants of the islands in the South China Sea. These countries believe that China would not compromise when it comes to the issues related to its sovereignty. And the fact that China has insisted on discussing the issue in a bilateral context has made ASEAN claimants nervous.

