

Canberra's best bet: Strengthening ASEAN

by Rodolfo C. Severino
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I wish to thank Mr Doug Chester, the High Commissioner of Australia, for clarifying the proposal of Mr Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia, for an Asia-Pacific Community. The clarification in Mr Chester's letter last Saturday ('Benefits of proposed Asia-Pacific Community') was made in response to my article, 'What's the point of a new Asia-Pacific architecture?' (Jan 7).

I especially appreciate the attention Mr Chester called to Mr Rudd's acknowledgement, in his Singapore Lecture last August, of the contributions the various ASEAN-centred arrangements have made to regional security, stability and prosperity.

However, I did not take issue with Mr Rudd's broad outline of his proposal, which necessarily lacked detail. I was commenting on the much more specific description of it by Mr Paul Kelly in The Australian of Dec 20, on the basis of which I concluded that the proposed new forum would not only be superfluous but would raise the question of whether it would undermine existing regional schemes.

It would be better if ASEAN and Australia were to work together to strengthen ASEAN and, as I concluded in my article, the institutions and processes it manages.

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