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| **ASEAN-China ties among most substantive partner relations of ASEAN: PM Phuc**  Hanoi – Prime Minister Phuc chaired the 23rd ASEAN-China Summit held online on Thursday afternoon with the participation of ASEAN leaders.  Opening the event, PM Phuc affirmed that the ASEAN-China strategic partnership and comprehensive cooperation were among the most dynamic and **substantive** partner relations of ASEAN.  “Both sides are leading trade partners of each other,” he said, noting that during the three decades of their efforts and contributions, the dialogue and cooperative relations between ASEAN and China had been uncreasingly prmoted and expanded to various fields, generating practical benefits for both sides.  He emphasised that China was the first partner to have discussed and co-ordinated with ASEAN in COVID-19 response, and joined hands with the bloc to carry out many conrete and practical activities, including sharing information and experience and assisting to improve the capacity of preventing and controlling COVID-19.  Despite challenges **posed** by the pandemic, ASEAN-China cooperation activities have still been implemented as planned in a flexible manner while bilateral trade remains stable, according to the PM.  Chinese Premier Li Keqiang affirmed that ASEAN was a high priority in his country’s neighbourhood policy.  China would continue helping ASEAN with community building, supporting the bloc’s central role in the region, and closely coordinating with it to improve the epidemic response capacity, minimise the pandemic’s socio-economic impact, and help with recovery and sustainable development, he said.  The Chinese side also pledged close coordination with ASEAN in the development and production of COVID-19 vaccines and medicine, noting that it would actively consider support to promote ASEAN people’s extensive access to vaccines.  Regarding cooperation orientations for the time ahead, both ASEAN and China underlined the need for continued cooperation to effectively respond to COVID-19 and carry out post-pandemic economic recovery efforts.  ASEAN and China would strengthen trade connectivity, ensure regional supply chains are maintained, effectively carry out the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement, promote trade liberalisation, step up the application of digital technology, ensure cyber security, and develop a digital economy, the participating leaders said.  China affirmed that it would encourage the import of agricultural products from ASEAN while creating conditions for Chinese investors to increase investment in the bloc and for ASEAN enterprises to invest and do business in China.  ASEAN countries welcomed China’s commitment to providing US1$ million for the ASEAN COVID-19 Response Fund and assisting the member nations to improve their epidemic response capacity.  ASEAN suggested the Northeast Asian country keep supporting the bloc’s anti-epidemic initiatives, including the stockpile of medical supplies, as well as efforts to address the pandemic’s consequences and promote recovery via the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, announced at the 37th ASEAN Summit.  Discussing the international and regional situation, the leaders of both sides shared the view on the importance of building the East Sea into a sea of peace, security, stability, and cooperation.  ASEAN affirmed its consistent principled **stance** of respecting law, increasing dialogue and building trust, exercising self-restraint, not having actions that may complicate the situation, and peacefully resolving disputes and differences on the basis of international law and the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.  Looking towards the 30th founding anniversary of ASEAN-China ties in 2021 and to overcome current challenges, PM Phuc suggested the two sides intensify collaboration to fight against COVID-19, deal with the pandemic’s **aftermath**, and promote comprehensive recovery.  They should actively assist businesses to capitalise on advantages generated by science-technology and digital transformation for recovery, ensure the stability of supply chains, strengthen connectivity, and foster sustainable development that puts people at the centre leaves no one behind, the Vietnamese leader recommended.  He stressed that as a big country and the world’s second largest economy, China’s role and its active and responsible contributions to regional and global peace, stability, and development would always be highly appreciated.  He welcomed China’s support for the **centrality** of ASEAN and its active contributions to efforts to promote dialogue, cooperation, and trust building via ASEAN-chaired and led frameworks in the region.  In terms of the East Sea issue, PM Phuc reiterated ASEAN’s principled stance on the East Sea, which had been clarified at the 36th ASEAN Summit in June, the 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in September, as well as this 37th ASEAN Summit.  He emphasised that both sides need to keep making efforts to fully and seriously implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the East Sea and build an efficient and effective code of conduct in the waters that is in line with international law and the 1982 UNCLOS.  The PM expressed his belief that with mutual trust and understanding, the friendship and cooperation built up over the last three decades between ASEAN and China would be further promoted, thereby contributing to regional stability and development. | **Substantive:** real or actual.  **Posed:** to present oneself insincerely.  **Stance:** thái độ, lập trường.  **Aftermath:** consequence, something that results from an event.  **Centrality:** a critical or important position. |