Asean and Australia: From friends to partners

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By Invitation

Tommy Koh

For The Straits Times

Last month, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull invited the leaders of Asean to attend a Special Summit in Sydney. Nine of Asean’s leaders attended the summit, which was held successfully and ended with the adoption of the Sydney Declaration.

A memorandum of understanding on cooperation to combat international terrorism was signed. At the same time, an Asean-Australia Business Summit and a Conference on Counter-Terrorism were also held in Sydney.

Australia is Asean’s oldest dialogue partner. The dialogue began in 1976. In the past 44 years, both Asean and Australia have been transformed. Their relationship has also changed in some fundamental ways.

What is the value of Asean to Australia? What is the value of Asean to Asean? What are the areas in which they have convergent and divergent interests? What is the future of the relationship?

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