Asean can learn from Mid-East woes, says Chan Chun Sing

He adds that regional bloc should not end up as a battleground for proxy contests

The trios-regional rivalry and lack of unity in the Middle East -- together with its strategic location and abundant energy resources -- have made it a proxy battleground for the major powers with interests in the region.

There are regional, global and local powers in the Middle East, including the US, Russia, Iran, Turkey, Israel and France, among others. The region is also seen as a potential battleground for China, which is building its global influence.

For Asean, which shares a similar strategic location and resources, the region provides a lesson on how to avoid becoming a proxy battleground for global powers.

Asean should do all it can to be a "neutral place where people from elsewhere can move and be engaged in the region," said Minister for Trade and Industry Chan Chun Sing. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

Rules are key, like at school: Ong Ye Kung

Lifelong learning is not a schoolyard slogan, Education Minister Ong Ye Kung said yesterday that small states like Singapore should thrive best in an orderliness environment with clear rules.

But the well-laid rules of small states that have emerged from the global order are now under threat.

"We are seeing more and more small states lose their advantage on the individual and in a set of nations," he said. "If you do your homework well, you submit your homework on time, and are helpful to the rest of your classroom, chances are the teacher will praise you, and you will do well in考试," he said.

In the same vein, Singapore is determined to make itself relevant and important in the world despite its small size, said Mr Ong, adding that foreign policy behaves like a "small state." It must be armed with "moxie" and have a strong voice for its countrymen, he said.

"Speaking at the annual conference of the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute, Mr Ong said that any fundamentally changed geopolitical landscape would not mean a new world order -- "it means a new world order without the United States, which is our biggest source of security." He said that Singaporeans must prepare for a "new kind of realpolitik.""