

'HOUSE-CLEANING FIRST'

Dr M: Why Viets won't invade

NSI 15 AUG 1981

JAKARTA, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad believes Vietnam is serious in wanting to rebuild itself and so will not have the time for a lot of adventures outside.

He told a Press conference at Wisma Negara, the State guest house, before departing for home after an overnight visit, that he also did not believe that Vietnam would invade Asean countries.

He said the Malaysian analysis of the situation in Vietnam was that if the political and military problems were resolved, then Vietnam would concentrate on its internal affairs and "so will not constitute a threat to Asean."

He was replying to a question whether Vietnam would constitute a "small frying pan" to Asean as against Russia and China being the "big frying pan."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who is making his first visit overseas since becoming Prime Minister last month, said the question of Asean

jumping into the "frying pan" did not arise. He said that China and Russia were equally "big frying pans" and as such Malaysia had followed a policy of being equidistant from all big powers.

On the concept of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (Zopfan), Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Malaysia believes that for an area to be neutralised, it has to be respected by the big powers.

"We are not worried so much about the small powers. They can't send battleships to our waters. But we are worried about the activities of the big powers."

Neutrality'

Zopfan, he said, would not be effective unless there is some form of recognition by the big powers. "So, it is necessary for us to cultivate the views of the big powers — Russia, China and the United States — so that neutrality will become a reality."

He conceded that it would not be easy to persuade the big powers as

they have their own ideas. "But we will continue to pursue this line."

Asean, he said, was quite unanimous in this and felt that the area should be left alone and any problems should be solved by countries in the region.

He said he did not see how the superpowers need to worry about the state of the region because "once they have accepted Zopfan they don't have any need to interfere and we will feel safer and not be threatened by China or Russia."

In a joint Press statement issued at the end of the visit, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir and President Suharto expressed their conviction that apolitical solution of the Kampuchean problem was vital for the realisation of Zopfan.

They believed that realisation of the concept would provide countries in the region the opportunity to devote their undivided attention to development of their respective countries

without foreign intervention or interference.

The statement said both leaders had an extensive exchange of views on developments in the region and expressed confidence in Asean as a vehicle for regional cooperation.

They noted that Asean had made a significant progress in developing itself into a cohesive regional grouping, capable of playing an independent and positive role in its endeavours to contribute to the political stability and economic viability of the region.

The statement said both leaders were concerned over the still unresolved Kampuchean problem but were encouraged that the International Conference on Kampuchea recently had received overwhelming support from the international community.

They felt that the declaration and resolution of the conference would facilitate a concrete move forward towards a comprehensive and durable political solution to the problem.

To a question on the

Kampuchea issue, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said though Vietnam still do not want to leave Kampuchea and there were still various factions claiming to represent the country, the door to negotiations was still open.

Though Asean could not force Vietnam to accept the solution, it could make a Political objective through the support of the nations of the world.

Such support would have the desired effect for no nation would want to be ostracised.

He said after getting the moral support from the nations of the world, Asean could go on with its political action to get the support from all factions in Kampuchea to work a solution.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir expressed confidence that all parties, including the big powers, would support the Asean move because it did not advocate the destruction of Vietnam or that it become a satellite of any power.

China had already accepted this and if Russia was also to agree, it would be a positive move to achieve peace in Indo-China, he added.