

Hanoi's dangerous precedent:

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Malaysia told Vietnam today that its invasion of Kampuchea sets a "very dangerous precedent" for other big countries to march into neighbouring territory simply because they do not like the government in power.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told visiting Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach that whatever Hanoi's problems in Kampuchea, the solution was not to move into that country and set up a government of Vietnam's choice.

Such action will cause "small countries to feel threatened because any big neighbour can come in if it feels threatened or does not like the government," said the Prime Minister.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir drove home this point to Mr Thach during a 45-minute discussion on the Kampuchea issue when the Vietnamese leader called on him this afternoon.

Also present were Foreign Minister Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Tan Sri Zakaria Ali and senior officials.

Vietnam invaded Kampuchea in January 1979 and installed the Heng Samrin government in Phnom Penh ousting the Democratic Kampuchean government led by the Khmer Rouge.

It is estimated that about 180,000 Vietnamese occupation troops are still in Kampuchea.

Tan Sri Zakaria, briefing reporters after the talks, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir told Mr Thach that the Heng Samrin administration "put there by Vietnam" cannot have the legitimacy of a government of the people's choice.

In the face of such observation from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, Mr Thach who had earlier explained why Vietnamese forces were in Kampuchea, reiterated that the exercise was a "right of self-defence as Kampuchea was used to threaten the security of Vietnam."

To this Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir had once again replied: "You don't go into a neighbouring territory just as you don't want others to go into your territory."

He said what Malaysia and other Asean countries were trying to do was to find a political solution to the protracted conflict whereby through a process of self-determination, Kampuchea would have a government with the legitimacy of the people's choice.

Approach

Malaysia's overall approach to the Kampuchean problem and South-East Asia is to ensure the exclusion of big-power rivalry, domination and interference in the region.

It is for this reason that Malaysia initiated the concept of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (Zopfan).

In fact, Malaysia's approach towards a solution to the Kampuchean problem is based on this concept.

Said Tan Sri Zakaria: "While we have not yet seen the light at the end of the tunnel, the Prime Minister welcomes the visit of Mr Thach."

"He (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir) expressed the hope that such discussions will result in better understanding of the problem which could lead to a solution."

He also welcomed the continuation of the dialogue between Vietnam and Malaysia as well as with other Asean countries.

The Prime Minister feels that the overall objectives of the two sides are similar — both want peace and stability in the region.

The question now is to find the approach.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir has accepted his Vietnamese counterpart Pham Van Dong's invitation to visit Hanoi.

This morning, Tan Sri Ghazali and Mr Thach held their first round of talks which lasted one hour forty minutes.

There was no new element in the talks, each side giving its perceptions and principles on the Kampuchean issue.

Tan Sri Zakaria told reporters that Tan Sri Ghazali had asked Mr Thach to clarify the much-publicised report of the Vietnamese "veiled threat" against Asean made by the Vietnamese leader in his visit to Singapore last weekend.

"Mr Thach said he did not talk of subversion. He was stating the Vietnamese position that if the Asean countries continue to carry out hostile activities against the Indo-

Chinese States, then they reserve the right of self-defence."

Tan Sri Zakaria said the Vietnamese leader expressed the hope that Hanoi would not have to resort to such right.

"It is not subversion" that Vietnam would resort to.

Tan Sri Ghazali explained to Mr Thach Malaysia's perception on how the Kampuchean problem could be resolved.

Tan Sri Zakaria described the atmosphere during the talks today as "friendly and serious."

There will be another round of discussion between Mr Thach and Tan Sri Ghazali tomorrow. Mr Thach who is here on a three-day visit is extending his stay by another day.