

Untimely pullout may start civil war: PM

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is concerned over the possibility of civil war erupting in Kampuchea if there was an "untimely" withdrawal of Vietnamese troops.

The Prime Minister expressed his concern during a three-hour meeting with Kampuchean leader Prince Norodom Sihanouk at his office here today.

Secretary-general of the Foreign Ministry, Datuk Yusof Hitam, told reporters that Dr Mahathir meant withdrawal of Vietnamese troops carried out outside any comprehensive solution to the Kampuchean problem.

"By untimely, he is thinking in terms of any withdrawal which is not part of a comprehensive solution.

"Such a withdrawal may leave a vacuum within Kampuchea and the Prime Minister was concerned that during this time, civil war may break out.

Sympathy

"If this happens, he felt that the present question of occupation (by Vietnamese troops) will then be a question of civil war."

Asked to elaborate on this, Datuk Yusof said that there would be a vacuum if there was no international peace-keeping force to take over from Vietnamese troops.

Datuk Yusof, who also attended the meeting, said Prince Sihanouk was also mindful of the threat of civil war with such an untimely withdrawal.

"The Prince did not want civil war. He is optimistic that if the current course is pursued the possibility of civil war is slightly more remote."

Others present at the meeting included Prince Sihanouk's son and president of the

Sihanouk — to meet UN chief very soon

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Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), Prince Norodom Ranariddh and acting Foreign Minister Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen.

Datuk Yusof said Dr Mahathir believed the Vietnamese would withdraw from Kampuchea and only its timing remained a question.

The Prime Minister was glad that the four parties involved were now pursuing a path of peace and re-affirmed Malaysia's support, sympathy and contributions for the CGDK which was formed in Kuala Lumpur in 1982.

Solution

Besides the Sihanouk loyalists, the other two parties in CGDK are Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge led by Khieu Samphan and the Kampuchean People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) under Son Sann.

Asean had arranged for last July's Jakarta informal meeting (JIM) where CGDK parties held discussions with Vietnam and the Vietnamese-backed Heng Samrin regime to work out a comprehensive solution.

On the Asean resolution to the United Nations, Datuk Yusof said there would be modifications to "get rid of confrontative words".

He said the resolution would still be on the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops, the right to self-determination of the Kampuchean people and humanitarian treatment of all involved.

Prince Sihanouk informed Dr Mahathir that he would go to the United Nations to meet secretary-general Javier Perez de Cuellar.

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