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Alatas: Sanctions not the solution

ASEAN does not agree with the developed nations for imposing sanctions against Cambodia as the move might bring about negative effects.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said Asean had reminded its Western dialogue partners that the association did not believe in stopping aid or imposing sanctions as an answer to end the conflict.

Speaking at a Press conference after the opening of the Asean Ministerial Meeting by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday, he said, Asean certainly did not share the same views with the West on the issue.

On Cambodia's possible admission into Asean by December, Alatas said it was not impossible but it would have to depend on the developments taking place in the country.

"We have said in general terms that in the process of trying to find a solution in Cambodia, the coalition Government will have to continue functioning.

"The coalition Cabinet must consist of members from the Cambodia People's Party and the Funcinpec," he said, adding that, "regardless whether it is led by Prince Norodom Ranariddh or by someone he (Ranariddh) agrees to."

Asked which faction of Funcinpec party will Asean support in view of the July 28 sitting of the Cambodian National Assembly, Alatas replied that the grouping would monitor the developments in Cambodia carefully.

"We are not completely unaware of what is going on in the country. Also, we have good ambassadors who are following the situation there closely."

Indeed, he added, when the time comes Asean Foreign Ministers would come to a right decision.

To a question whether Asean would use a specific guideline in making the decision, Alatas said the three Foreign Ministers who were members of the Asean Mission panel would follow the developments and continue to remain at the forefront of activities in establishing contacts with the relevant groups.

When asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's remark on speculators of the Asean currencies during his opening address, Alatas said the Prime Minister's speech deserved Asean attention.

"It is quite an interesting development and also a painful experience for some of us (in Asean) on the sudden attack by speculative forces on our currencies."

He added there were bound to be questions on the motive of the attack on the Asean currencies particularly when the macro-economy of the region was in a strong position.

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