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AMM: Cambodia yet to confirm its participation

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THE Association of South-East Asian Nations (Asean) has not received any confirmation from the Cambodian Government as to who they will send to the two-day 30th Asean Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in Kuala Lumpur beginning July 24.

"There is no written communications from Cambodia," Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamed said yesterday.

"Till today, we have no confirmation on whether they are coming or who is coming. We hope to get a clearer picture by the time the Asean foreign ministers gather here," he said at a briefing in Kuala Lumpur for journalists covering the AMM, the 4th Asean Regional Forum (ARF) on July 27 July and the two-day Post-Ministerial Meeting (PMC) beginning July 28.

The AMM will be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on July 24.

Cambodia will be attending the AMM as observer, a status accorded to it two years ago, as its admission into Asean has been deferred due to the present political situation there. It was initially scheduled to be admitted into Asean at the AMM, together with Laos and Myanmar. Asean, at its foreign ministers' special meeting in Kuala Lumpur on July 10, decided to defer its admission.

Asean, however, will go ahead with the admission of Laos and Myanmar into its fold at the AMM.

Asked if First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh, who was ousted by Second Prime Minister Hun Sen in a July 6 coup, may attend the Asean meetings, Abdul Kadir said Wisma Putra has no information on his programme or whereabouts.

Before the coup, Ranariddh had confirmed participation in the three-day Langkawi International Dialogue (LID) beginning July 27. Hun Sen was also invited to the LID but the dialogue organisers did not received any indication as to whether or not he will be attending.

Meanwhile, countries attending the AMM, ARF and PMC - with the exception of Cambodia, which have not confirmed participation, India and Papua New Guinea - will be represented by their foreign ministers.

Earlier, Abdul Kadir said India will be represented by its Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral but a news report from New Delhi said Gujral will not attend the ARF as "he wants to be in the capital for the close of nominations for the country's next vice-president."

India will be represented in Malaysia by a junior minister. Papua New Guinea, which has a observer status at the ARF, will be represented by an envoy.

Asean's ARF dialogue partners are: Australia, US, Canada, European Union, New Zealand, China, South Korea, India, Japan, Cambodia, Laos and Papua New Guinea. Its 10 PMC dialogue partners are: Australia, Canada, China, US, EU, India, New Zealand, Russian Federation, South Korea and Japan.

Abdul Kadir said the US delegation to the ARF and PMC will be led by its Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

The ARF, set up in 1993, provides an informal setting for the foreign ministers to discuss political and security issues. For the first time this year, the foreign ministers attending the ARF will be accompanied by two officials each, be they foreign ministry officials or defence

officials.

Abdul Kadir said there is no specific agenda for the ARF. "The ministers are free to raise any issues," he added.

He saw no difficulties for the EU or the US to sit with Myanmar at the ARF as they had done this before. The EU and the US have called for action against Myanmar for its human rights abuses.

The PMC, dubbed "Asean plus One" meeting, provides a forum for discussing projects which would otherwise not be taken up at the joint meetings of Asean and its 10 dialogue partners.

Malaysia, on behalf of Asean, will chair separate meetings with Canada and China, Brunei (Australia), Indonesia (US), Singapore (EU and India), Vietnam (New Zealand and Russian Federation), Philippines (South Korea) and Thailand (Japan).

A total of 200 local and 300 foreign journalists will be covering the AMM, ARF and PMC.

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