

23/07/1997

Asean urged not to adopt non-interference policy

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THE Association of South-East Asian Nations (Asean) cannot afford to adopt a non-interference stance in relation to the political conflict in Cambodia, a Cambodian allied to exiled Prince Ranariddh said in Kuala Lumpur.

The source, who declined to be named, said the question of non-interference must be clearly defined.

He said the South-East Asian grouping should not condone the events in Cambodia where the democratically-elected Government was thrown out and people killed.

"Asean should not recognise Second Prime Minister Hun Sen as the leader of the Cambodians," he said.

"Your Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had blamed the Europeans for not being able to solve the Balkan crisis. The same thing is now happening in Asean's backyard," he said.

He warned that unless the Cambodian crisis is solved at the negotiating table, there will be civil war in the kingdom, throwing back the country into isolation.

The source said Ranariddh is likely to visit Kuala Lumpur after the Asean foreign ministers meeting.

He said Ranariddh will not attend the meeting in Kuala Lumpur so as not to "disturb" the 30th Asean anniversary celebrations.

According to him, Ranariddh will meet Kuala Lumpur leaders after the meeting. He had met Dr Mahathir in Europe and the prince will meet King Norodom Sihanouk in China.

Meanwhile, chairman of Asean-Institute of Strategic and International Studies Jusuf Wanadi said Asean should practise constructive intervention when dealing with the Cambodian problem as it has an obligation to do so.

"The cooperation between Asean countries is very strong," he told reporters during coffee break at the Second Asean Congress.

The congress is organised by the Asean-Isis in conjunction with the Asean foreign ministers' annual meeting.

Jusuf said coup leader Hun Sen does not understand the changes taking place globally.

"That is why he can tell Asean off and threaten to pull Cambodia from joining the grouping," he said.

"He thinks he can lead Cambodia into isolation just as in the 1970s."

"What he does not understand is that things have changed and further isolation would mean the end of Cambodia," he explained.

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