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## Investments in Cambodia safe

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CAMBODIAN First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh said Malaysian investments are safe and doing very well in Cambodia although he admitted that there is political instability in Cambodia.

Even then, he said, the instability should be resolved soon now that Asean has decided to admit Cambodia, along with Laos and Myanmar, into the grouping.

"With Asean's decision to accept Cambodia into the grouping, we will be able to really achieve political stability," he told reporters after attending the opening of the four-day 11th Asia Pacific Roundtable conference organised by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

He was asked whether Malaysian investments in Cambodia are safe in view of the political crisis in Phnom Penh caused by a power struggle.

Ranariddh said Phnom Penh will continue to foster ties with Kuala Lumpur despite the political problems in Cambodia.

He quashed reports that Malaysian companies were facing problems in Cambodia. "In fact, Malaysian investments in Cambodia are doing quite well," he said.

It was reported in April that Cambodian Second Prime Minister Hun Sen had written a letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad criticising the action by Ranariddh to declare null and void several agreements pertaining to investments of Malaysia's Ariston Sdn Bhd in Cambodia.

In the letter, Hun Sen had assured Dr Mahathir that the agreements were still legitimate. The agreements were part of a RM3.25 billion project undertaken by Ariston to develop Sihanoukville town as a tourist destination.

Asked if Cambodia is ready to join Asean next month, Ranariddh said his country is "more than ready".

"Because as a member of Asean, this will help Cambodia not only in terms of national consolidation but in its economy as well."

Asked whether the political problems in Cambodia could jeopardise its admission into Asean, Ranariddh said: "If the situation is very bad, how could I leave Cambodia and attend this function? My presence here shows that the situation in Cambodia is going well."

Cambodia's admission into Asean, along with the entry of Laos and Myanmar, was decided during the group's informal foreign ministers meeting in Kuala Lumpur on May 31. The ministers decided that the three countries will be admitted into the grouping during the Asean Ministerial Meeting next month.

As to when Cambodia expects to integrate the requirements outlined under the Asean Free Trade Area, Ranariddh said the Cambodian Government has requested a slight delay for it to implement the requirements by 2008.

Asked to comment on a foreign news report that Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot has been granted asylum by another country, Ranariddh said he cannot immediately confirm this and have to verify the report first.

Pol Pot, blamed for the deaths of up to two million Cambodians during his four-year reign of terror in the 1970s, was reported to have left Cambodia with two other Khmer Rouge leaders, Ta Mok and Son Sen. Quoting the Cambodian Daily newspaper, the report said the trio left Cambodia as part of a deal under which remaining guerillas under their command would

surrender to the Government.

Bernama reports: Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday hosted a luncheon for Ranariddh at a leading hotel in Kuala Lumpur.

Also present were Finance Ministry secretary-general Tan Sri Clifford Herbert, Policy Research Institute director Datuk Kamaruddin Jaafar and other dignitaries.

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