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Development and economy our priorities: Hun Sen

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DEVELOPMENT and economy are the priorities of the Cambodian Government and the primary aspiration of the Cambodian people as a whole, its Prime Minister Hun Sen said yesterday.

"As an economy-oriented Government, Cambodia must guarantee its own pacification and the respect of human rights in order to transform the liberal pluralistic democracy into a strong force of the society and stability in the state of law, and the spirit of national reconciliation and concord.

"After that we can concentrate our energy to build the economy of Cambodia into a new impetus, in accordance with the demand of development in Cambodia in the near future," Hun Sen said in his public lecture entitled "Cambodia: Towards a New Future" in Kuala Lumpur.

"As far as investment is concerned, whether national or foreign, belief and confidence are important.

"National reconciliation, peace strengthening, diplomatic and international relations, as well as economic and social affairs, all require belief and confidence, which will lead us to the common goal," he said.

Hun Sen also said his visit to Malaysia is important to strengthen understanding of the situation in Cambodia.

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad plays great attention to Cambodia. The support by Malaysia for Cambodia's entry into Association of South-East Asian Nations (Asean) is of great political value.

"With more investors coming into Cambodia this shows there is now progress. At this time, we also suggested that Cambodia exports maize, rice and cattle to Malaysia. Without a market, we cannot do so," he said. He added that Cambodia's entry into Asean will make the dream of Asean-10 come true before the 21st century.

Asked if a Senate has been formed as it was one of the prerequisites to join Asean, Hun Sen said efforts are being made.

"The setting up of a Senate is Cambodia's internal affair. It is not to please Asean but rather to please certain people in Cambodia. However, this is an important issue for Cambodia, and we will take some time in doing this.

"If the setting up of the Senate is like an entertainment club, maybe it will only take us five hours. However, it is not and it take some time," he said, adding that the Government has already reached an agreement so all that is needed is time.

He reminded that an important point of Cambodia's entry into Asean was its non-interference policy.

Last December, Asean leaders agreed in principle to admit Cambodia as the grouping's 10th member and instructed their foreign ministers to arrange a special ceremony for Cambodia at an appropriate time in future. Asean currently comprises Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Hun Sen was in Malaysia for a three-day official visit.

Dr Mahathir yesterday bade farewell to Hun Sen before leaving for London last night enroute to Kingston to attend the Group of 15 meeting..

Dr Mahathir spent about 45 minutes talking with Hun Sen who will fly home today.

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