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POLITICS

Cambodian-Thai Border Issue: PM, ASEAN Secretary General Stress on Patience

Samdech Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and visiting ASEAN Secretary General Dr. Surin Pitsuwan have shared the same idea on the need of patience regarding the current Cambodia-Thailand border dispute.

During their two-hour meeting here on Aug. 16, both sides also stressed on avoiding further armed clashes, refraining from war of words and resolving the border conflict peacefully, H.E. Sry Thamrong, Minister attached to the Prime Minister, told reporters upon the meeting.

Cambodia has followed closely the Thai government's attitude showing that it would submit the last three border agreements signed with Cambodia to the Thai Assembly for approval, he said.

Cambodia is determined to settle [the border issue with Thailand] by existing mechanisms, H.E. Sry Thamrong underlined.

ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan arrived here last Sunday to join an international exercise to prepare for severe pandemics. He also led a 30-member Muslim delegation to strengthen relations with Cambodia's Muslim community.

Earlier on the same day, the visiting ASEAN Secretary General also met with Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister H.E. Hor Namhong who reaffirmed Cambodia's stand in solving the border dispute with Thailand by peaceful means.

The Cambodian deputy prime minister further stressed that

Cambodia is ready to defend its territorial integrity against any act of aggression.

Cambodia has recently sent letters to UN General Assembly President H.E. Ali Abdussalam Treki, UN Security Council President H.E. Vitaly Churkin and ASEAN President H.E. Pham Gia Khiem, seeking their mediation to Cambodia-Thailand border conflict.

Cambodia Sticks to Peaceful Means to Settle Border Issue with Thailand

Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation H.E. Hor Namhong has reaffirmed Cambodia's stand in solving the current border dispute with Thailand by peaceful means.

In a meeting in Phnom Penh with visiting ASEAN Secretary General H.E. Surin Pitsuwan, the Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister further stressed that Cambodia is ready to defend its territorial integrity against any act of aggression.

Both sides also discussed about ASEAN Community establishment, the cooperation between ASEAN and other regional organizations including the African Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, etc. in order to enhance ASEAN's prestige and to fight against terrorism, said H.E. Hor Namhong in a short interview upon the meeting.

Regarding the sanctions against Iran, the Cambodian deputy prime minister said sanction is not a solution. The solutions to all problems are negotiation and compromise, he added.

Cambodia Seeks ASEAN's Assistance in Solving Border Dispute with Thailand

Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation H.E. Hor Namhong has sent a letter to his Vietnamese counterpart H.E. Pham Gia Khiem, chair of ASEAN, seeking his assistance to meditate Cambodia-Thailand border conflict.

The full letter dated Aug. 14 reads as follows:

"Excellency,

I have the honour to recall to Your Excellency that after the inscription of the TEMPLE OF PREAH VIHEAR into the World Heritage List on 7 July 2008, despite Thailand's strong opposition, Thailand sent troops to aggress against Cambodia three times:

- On 15 July 2008, despite Thailand sent troops to occupy the KEO SIKHA KIRI SVARA pagoda of Cambodia.

- On 15 October 2008, the Thai troops crossed into Cambodian territory and clashed with Cambodian soldiers at three locations in the vicinity of the TEMPLE OF PREAH VIHEAR, killing two Cambodian troops and injuring two others.

- On 3 April 2009, the Thai troops again crossed the border into the vicinity of the TEMPLE OF PREAH VIHEAR, including the area in front of the Temple, and fired heavy weapons, destroying the office of the PREAH VIHEAR Authority and the market located inside the premises of the TEMPLE OF PREAH VIHEAR, as well as damaging the main staircases in front of the Temple.

At present, Thailand still maintains the presence of its soldiers at the KEO SIKHA KIRI SVARA pagoda of Cambodia, which is located only around 300 meters from the TEMPLE OF PREAH VIHEAR and well inside the territory Cambodia.

Until now, Cambodia has exercised utmost restraint and attempted to find a peaceful solution to the problem bilaterally, but to no avail. Thailand continues to stake territorial claims of the so-called 4.6 km^2 area in the vicinity of the TEMPLE OF PREAH VIHEAR, on the basis of its secret and unilaterally drawn map, without international legal value. Recently, Thailand's Prime Minister threatened publicly to use military force to remove the Cambodian troops and local inhabitants out of this so-called 4.6 km^2 land which Cambodia does not even know where it is exactly located, as the whole area is inhabited by Cambodian people since ages.

May I further recall that based on the Annex I Map (Dangrek Map), produced by the Franco-Siamese Commission for the delimitation of frontiers between Indochina and Siam which was set up by the Franco-Siamese Convention of 1904, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) adjudicated on the TEMPLE OF PREAH VIHEAR case, on 15 June 1962, as follows:

1. The Temple of Preah Vihear is situated in territory under the sovereignty of Cambodia;

2. Thailand is under an obligation to withdraw any military of police forces, or other guards or keepers, stationed by her at the Temple, or in its vicinity of Cambodian territory;

3. Thailand is under an obligation to restore to Cambodia any objects of the kind specified in Cambodia's fifth Submission which may, since the date of the occupation of the Temple by Thailand in 1954, have been removed from the Temple or the Temple area by the Thai authorities.

Therefore, taking into account the above adjudication of the ICJ, the territory in the vicinity of the TEMPLE OF PREAH VIHEAR, is under the sovereignty of Cambodia, in accordance with the "Annex I Map" legally and internationally recognized, which is the only map that legally delimits the border in the area of TEMPLE OF PREAH VIHEAR and is binding to both Cambodia and Thailand.

The problem stems from the fact that Thailand continues to exert its territorial claims based on its secret and unilaterally drawn map, without any international legal basis, while Cambodia's position is to seek a bilateral peaceful settlement on the basis of the legally and internationally recognized documents which have also been recognized by Thailand until the inscription of the TEMPLE OF PREAH VIHEAR into the World Heritage List on 7 July 2008.

Bilateral negotiations have lasted more than two years, since 2008, namely three meetings at foreign minister level (July 2008 in Siem Reap, August 2008 in Hua Hin, November 2009 in Siem Reap) and three meetings of the Joint border Commission (JBC) between Cambodia and Thailand (November 2008 in Siem Reap, February 2009 in Bangkok, April 2009 in Phnom Penh) have yielded a number of agreed arrangements that could lead to the resolution of the problem. However, the Thai side did not submit them for its own parliamentary approval and to allow the implementation of those arrangements.

As the current stalemate has extinguished any hope on further bilateral negotiations and in order to avoid any large scale armed conflict, while considering the spirit of ASEAN's solidarity and the fact that both Cambodia and Thailand are fellow members of the ASEAN family, I earnestly seek Your Excellency's assistance, as Chair of ASEAN, to mediate on the matter under the ASEAN framework either as a whole or on an individual basis involving only certain ASEAN members, in line with the Principles of the ASEAN Charter, Article 2 (c) and (d).

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration."

Cambodia Holds Table Top Exercise for Managing the Impact of Pandemics

Foreign officials gathered here on Aug. 16 to hold Southeast Asia Regional Multisectoral Pandemic Preparedness and Response Table Top Exercise for Managing the Impact of Pandemics on Societies, Governments and Organizations.

The table top exercise, which runs through from Aug. 16 to 20, was presided over by Senior Minister Dr. Nhim Vanda, first vice president of the National Committee for Disaster Management of the Royal Government of Cambodia with the participation of Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, secretary general of ASEAN, Dr. Pieter Johannes Van Maaren, representative of the country United Nations and World Health Organization (WHO) and Mr. Flynn Fuller, mission director of U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID).

The foreign officials, who participated in the 5-day forum, are from the 10 ASEAN member countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

In his remarks at the function, Senior Minister Dr. Nhim Vanda stressed the value of the event to the region.

"Cambodia was one of the first countries in Southeast Asia to focus its preparedness efforts on non-health sectors. This event provides the opportunities to bring the multi-sector preparedness focus to a regional level and set an example that can be followed on a global front," he said

"We are all aware that the global pandemic which is in critical form is surely affecting the lives of the human beings, and socio-economic status of our nations," he added.

He also suggested "there is only one strategy to deal with the issue, that is, to prevent and reduce the impact to a minimum level through which all of us shall set an advance

planning before a critical moment by such pandemic arises."

Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, secretary general of ASEAN, said "a pandemic's disastrous nature lies in its ability to cause massive morbidity, disability and loss of human lives that could lead to severe social and economic disruptions due to discontinuity of essential services, operations and businesses."

"The readiness of countries and the entire region to manage a highly disruptive pandemic is of prime regional and global concern. Thus, the promotion of the whole-of-society or multi-sectoral approach is something that ASEAN wish to direct the support of its partners and all stakeholders," he said.

UNFPA: Cambodia Is on the Right Track

Cambodia is on the right track to achieve the 5th Millennium Development Goal related to mother and child mortality rate, said the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Country Director Ms. Alice Levisay during a farewell meeting here last Monday with Deputy Prime Minister H.E. Keat Chhon.

Cambodia has trained professional midwives and built many health centers during the last three years, said Ms. Alice Levisay, who is going to complete her mission here in late August 2010.

Cambodia has further improved and developed physical infrastructure, including rural, provincial and national routes to facilitate patients' traveling, she said.

For his part, H.E. Keat Chhon, also minister of Economy and Finance, expressed thanked to the UNFPA country director and her colleagues for their precious assistance to Cambodia's social and economic development and wished her success in her future assignment.

In Cambodia, UNFPA's works focus on population survey and support to health care sector, particularly the protection of mothers and children from HIV/AIDS.

Integrated Efforts Crucial in Helping Cambodia to Respond to Climate Change

The Royal Government of Cambodia and its development partners on Wednesday stressed on the need for integrated efforts under different climate change-related initiatives to ensure high efficiency in helping the country to respond to the impact of this global problem.

The message came during the inception workshop of the Cambodia Climate Change Alliance (CCCA) which was held today (Aug. 18). The event marked the beginning of a new implementation phase of the CCCA following its launch on Feb. 25 this year, said a press release of the Cambodian Ministry of Environment.

Cambodia, where some 80 percent of the population live in the countryside and depend on agriculture for livelihoods, is deemed vulnerable to impacts of climate change events such as drought, erratic patterns of rain falls, and flooding. However, along with these challenges there are also opportunities for funding to least developed countries like Cambodia. But Cambodia needs to prepare and strengthen its institutional capacity to make use of those opportunities for sustainable socio-economic development.

The CCCA, a multi-donor funded initiative, was created for this objective. The CCCA will strengthen the key institutions – including the National Committee on Climate Change, the Climate Change Department, and key climate change functional units within sectors at national and sub-national levels. The aim is to support the integration of climate change considerations into policy and planning processes to build a national adaptation system.

The CCCA initiative is supported by the Climate Change Trust Fund of US$8.9 million – which covers the period 2010-2012 – from the European Union, UNDP, SIDA, and DANIDA, the representatives of which also attended the workshop on Wednesday.

For climate change impacts are too big for any single project, ministry or development partner to act alone, it is crucial to consolidate and harmonise different initiatives through the promotion of a National Programme for climate change, Rafael Dochao Moreno, Chargé d'Affaires, European Union Delegation to Cambodia, said in his speech on behalf of all the CCCA donors.

Cambodia, Vietnam Fight Against Border Crimes

The Police forces of Cambodia's Mondulkiri province and Vietnam's southern province

of Binh Phuoc signed on Wednesday in Binh Phouc a cooperative program to fight against crimes in border areas, Vietnam News Agency (VNA) reported.

According to Director of Binh Phuoc provincial Police Department Nguyen Chi Cuong, police forces of the two provinces will exchange information relating to border criminals and work closely to facilitate border demarcation and marker planting between the two countries, VNA said.

They will also tightly control all border travel of citizens of each country and create favorable conditions for people of both countries to exchange goods, visit family members and undertake medical check-ups, it added.

The police forces of Mondulkiri and Binh Phuoc provinces have worked together to prevent illegal wood product transportation, drug trafficking and the trading of stolen motorbikes, said VNA.

Neak Loeung Bridge's Construction To Begin in Late 2010

The construction of Neak Loeung Bridge linking the national road 1 is expected to begin at the end of this year or early next year, said Minister of Public Works and Transport H.E. Tram Iv Tek.

At the signing ceremony of an agreement between Chodai Technical Advisory Company, Oriental Consultant Company and the Cambodian Ministry of Public Works and Transport held here last Wednesday, H.E. Tram Iv Tek said the construction of Neak Loeung Bridge would start in late 2010 or early 2011 and finish in Mar. 2015.

Once finished, the bridge will facilitate the travel and transportation between Cambodia and Vietnam and be useful for the Greater Mekong Sub-region countries, he said.

It will also contribute to boosting the economic, cultural, social cooperation and the ties of friendship between Cambodia and Japan, he underlined.

The 37.5-meter high, 13.5-meter wide and 2,200-meter long Neak Loeung Bridge is the second bridge across the Mekong River.

Economy

Government To Insure Banks for 50 Percent of Any Risks in Rice Production

The Royal Government of Cambodia will insure for 50 percent of any risks all the private commercial banks that provided a loan credit for rice production, said Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen.

Samdech Techo made these remarks, while presiding over the launch of the government's Policy Paper on the Promotion of Paddy Production and Rice Export in a ceremony held at the Council of Development of Cambodia (CDC) in Phnom Penh on Aug. 17.

He also pointed out some issues relating to the resolution to the difficult problems in response to a letter sent by a representative of private banks, H.E. Pong Khieu Se.

He called on all the private banks to share a part of the collected loan in the rice production in the country.

He also thanked Canadia Bank, Bank of Vietnam and Foreign Trade Bank for their contributions to the rice production, hoping other private banks will do the same purpose.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen appealed to Cambodians to resume consuming pork even thought there were the outbreaks of swine epidemic in the past.

He encouraged the Cambodian people to continue consuming pork because the disease cannot be transferable to humans if the pork is cooked well.

However, he still banned live pig import from the neighboring countries.

ADB Pledges to Provide US$597.7 Million to Cambodia

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has pledged to provide US$597.7 million in grant and loan to Cambodia for a three-year period, from 2011 to 2013.

The promise was made known here on Aug. 18 upon the meeting between Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance H.E. Keat Chhon and ADB Country Director Mr. Putu Kamayana.

Of the total amount, some US$558.5 million will be used to support 23 development projects in nine fields including agriculture, natural resources and rural development, communication, energy, urban development, clean water supply, education and vocational training, financial development, and public and private development, according to a press release of the Cambodian Ministry of Economy and Finance.

The rest, US$39.2 million, will be used for 36 local and Greater Mekong Subregion-framework projects, it said.

Mr. Putu Kamayana said the ADB's assistance to Cambodia for the next three years saw an increase if compared with that of the last three years. This is due to Cambodia's commitment and endeavors in developing the country and alleviating poverty.

For his parts, H.E. Keat Chhon said ADB continued to play key role in Cambodian development.

Cambodia Opens Trade Fair to Promote Investment and Trade Chances

Cambodia opened trade fair on Wednesday with an aim to promote investment and trade opportunities in this country.

The three-day trade fair opened Wednesday through Friday is expected to bring in more than 200 international exhibitors and millions of dollars of investment and trading opportunities, reported Chinese News Agency Xinhua.

The fair is organized by Cambodia Investment & Business Development (CIBD) and supported by Cambodia Ministry of Commerce, Cambodia Chamber of Commerce and Cambodia Professionals Network (COMPRONET)-- is held at Diamond Island Conventional & Exhibition Center, in a newly developed island in Cambodia's capital of Phnom Penh.

The trade fair brings in about 60 booths taken up mostly by the foreign companies, include companies from ASEAN countries, South Korea, China, Japan, India, and others which are interested to explore the investment and trading opportunities, according to Mong Lina, spokesperson for the event.

The organizer is putting in efforts to organize comprehensive business matching session to enable the entrepreneurs from overseas to have direct and close interaction with the Cambodian entrepreneurs and government officers.