Cambodia: Hun Sen says he will never hold peace talks with 'revolution' plotters

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BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Oct 26 (Borneo Bulletin/ANN): Prime Minister Hun Sen has ruled out any political negotiation, saying while he could end wars in Cambodia, he would not be able to teach an opposition group “attempting to destroy the nation through a colour revolution”.

Hun Sen made the remarks while providing food aid to flood-affected victims in Banteay Meanchey province on Saturday (Oct 24).

“I only have the ability to stop wars and armed conflicts. But I don’t have the ability to become a preacher to teach a group who attempt to destroy the nation with a colour revolution,” he said.

“Some foreign ambassadors said to me that I was able to solve the problem with the guerrilla Khmer Rouge group, but why can I not solve the problem with the opposition group?
“My compatriots, what can Hun Sen do when they keep saying that Hun Sen’s supporters are ‘yuon’?” he said using a derogatory term used by some to refer to the Vietnamese.

He recalled the path leading to unification after the collapse of the Khmer Rouge, including negotiating before the Paris Peace Accords on Oct 23, 1991, integrating Khmer Rouge fighters into the government and ending guerrilla warfare on December 29, 1998.

He said those who attempt to start a colour revolution allege his Cambodian People’s Party supporters are Vietnamese.

“They always adhere to a zero-sum principle. If they continue like this, I cannot work with them. The opposition never had an honest will to unify, only to destroy,” he said.

“Some people said a solution will come soon. No, I don’t need to have a political solution with anyone because they [opposition] have to deal only with the law. I don’t need a political negotiation. I am announcing to my compatriots that I don’t negotiate with anyone.

“Those who break the law have to deal with the court and they need to first serve a prison sentence. After that, we can talk. You can form a political party after serving a jail term; that’s your right.”

While recalling the 29th anniversary of the Paris Peace Accord, Hun Sen said he had seen messages sent from opposition groups in the US telling their local followers to hold protests in front of the Chinese and US embassies in Phnom Penh.

On Friday, the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights (CCHR) said several people protested in front of the Chinese embassy calling for China to respect the spirit of the Paris Peace Accords, but they were blocked by authorities. The protesters also gathered at the US and French embassies to deliver their petitions.

Former opposition lawmaker Ou Chanrath said on Sunday that negotiation was necessary if a large number of people in the country continued their spirit of contesting the government even without the opposition party. He said negotiation is for the sake of the nation.

He said another solution would be for the opposition group to join the government after going through legal procedures. He did not believe that the opposition group was carrying out a colour revolution.

“Samdech [Hun Sen] had the ability to negotiate for the October 23 [Paris Peace Accord] and end the war. He could even integrate the outlawed Khmer Rouge into the government. So I believe he also has the ability to end the conflict and make a compromise [with the opposition].

“We don’t even have arms, why isn’t it possible to reunite? I believe Samdech has the
ability if he has the will,” Chanrath said.

Kin Phea, the director of the Royal Academy of Cambodia’s International Relations Institute, said an individual sentenced by a court could be involved in politics only if they have been politically rehabilitated.

He said Hun Sen’s political life went through many stages of negotiation with many groups, including those who hated him and those who were fighting against him on the battlefield and at the negotiation table.

He said negotiation was only possible when the opposition group has a spirit to unite.

“The prime minister raised the issue because the opposition group always adheres to a zero-sum principle. Most of their political activities affect national interests. It's difficult for a legitimate leader to compromise with those who have a tendency to destroy the nation,” he said.