

Politics

COWBOY DIPLOMACY

"Abhisit could die from problems"

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Cambodian PM Hun Sen's recent interview showed no love lost between him and the current Thai government.

Cambodian PM Hun Sen meets the press and following is an excerpt of his conversation.

Problems with the Thai-Cambodia bilateral ties:

The problem with Thai-Cambodia relations is really a problem between myself and Khun Abhisit (Vejjajiva), the prime minister of Thailand. Before anybody speaks about this, they need to understand that I have been working in politics when the Thai prime minister was still a child.

Border closing:

If you want to close the border, close it. Cambodia will take up action in response. Cambodia will close the border, as well as shut out economic activities as well. Even one mouse will not be permitted to cross the border. **We can get Thai goods through other countries.** In 2008, Thailand exported US\$2 billion to Cambodia - but Cambodia exported only US\$90 million to Thailand. I don't want to close the border as it would affect the people, but the Thai prime minister is making threats.

Appointing Thaksin Shinawatra as economic adviser:

I want to be clear to all Thai people that the government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva is the one making an issue out of this. Cambodia has appointed a number of foreigners as economic advisers in the past, including Koreans and Australians and I don't see what the prime minister is afraid of. I have explained to the Asean meeting in Hua Hin, and I have been very patient about it, but I have been at the receiving end of Thailand's attack. It was Abhisit who went on and invalidated the MoU (on joint development of overlapping territory in the Gulf of Thailand).

Who is really serving whom?

Khun Abhisit is alleging that Thailand's dignity is at stake. But I want to tell you that the "red shirts" support this appointment (of Thaksin) but the "yellow shirts" don't. And there are those who are remaining quiet about this whole thing. These people know that the Hun Sen government is a good administration. My government is not being used by anybody. I think it's Abhisit who has become a tool of Thaksin. Whenever Thaksin opens up on certain issues, it is Abhisit who reacts accordingly and acted without thinking about the interests of the country and its people. He is using personal reasons to cancel cooperation between two countries. Can Thai people live with a leader like this? Can a person like this lead Asean? Asean will eventually become one market and possibly one currency but it's Thailand who is behaving aggressively against Cambodia. During the Angkor civilisation there were accusations that Thailand had lost territory to Cambodia. Study your history and you will see who is the real aggressor.

What can Asean do?

Cambodia is prepared to negotiate any place, any time, in a bilateral or multilateral setting. But it appeared that Thailand has already decided that this is not going to happen. Asean Secretary-General Surin (Pitsuwan) needs to understand that it has to be comprehensive and should include the 19 September 2006 coup (against Thaksin), the overlapping claims along the border, the appointment of Thaksin as economic advisor. You can use whatever mechanism you want, Cambodia is ready. I helped save Thailand and Abhisit's face by not talking about this at Asean Summit in Hua Hin. You want to solve this problem you should go to the beginning. If this is about appointing Thaksin, then we need to all the way back to the 19 September coup. If Abhisit is so capable, why not dissolve the Parliament and call for a new election. What is he afraid of? I am the prime minister of Cambodia who received two-third of the vote and how much vote did Abhisit received or did he stole his seat from other people? If so how do you expect to respect you?

Insulting Thailand

Abhisit is faced with all kinds of problems. He could die from it. He has problem with all his neighbours, including Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia and Myanmar. Moreover, he has problem with the yellow shirt, the red shirt and the blue shirt and the white shirt. Even the yellow shirt are not united among their own kind. What due respect does Cambodia has to give Thailand? Appointing Thaksin has nothing to do with Thailand? I have told Abhisit that Thaksin is my friend. Friend don't betray friend.

About disrespecting Thailand's judicial system:

There is nothing in the Thai judicial system that is worth respecting. In the past Khieu Samphan, Nuan Chea was residing in Cambodia before they relocate to Cambodia. This was not only a violation of international laws and norms, Thailand even endorse Khmer Rogue and the peace process. I want the Thai people to know that the government don't even respect international law and so how can we even respect Thai

judicial system?

On Preah Vihear Temple:

We negotiated with Thailand three times. We agreed to solve the problem peacefully. But the agreement they signed was erased with their feet. Thailand obstructed Thailand's bid (for Unesco World Heritage) and has the nerve to say that it has nothing to do with Cambodia. It's like they are calling us stupid. Thailand has used Preah Vihear as a hostage and used it to take down a government. I have asked Parliament President Chai Chidchob for help but he said the issue has passed the Parliament. Thailand politicised this issue at the expense of prolonging the problem.

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