

Thais to consider PLO office

KAVI CHONGKITTAVORN

The Nation

Jakarta

TH

5/9/92

THAILAND would consider a request from the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) to open an office in Bangkok, Foreign Minister Arsa Sarasin told PLO leader Yasser Arafat here last night.

■ Related story: A4

Arsa said that Arafat welcomed Thailand to the Non-Aligned Movement and urged that it become a full member.

During the 30-minute talk, Arafat briefed Arsa on the Middle East talks and the PLO desire to establish trade relations with Thailand.

Arafat told Arsa the PLO has either embassies or missions in most countries in Asia.

At the end of 1990, when Chatichai Choonhavan was prime minister, the Foreign Ministry and the National Security Council agreed to allow the PLO to open a representative office in Bangkok.

It was not approved by the Cabinet because of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which the PLO supported.

A Foreign Ministry official was doubtful whether the Anand government would be able to approve the move before its term ends on Sept 13.

Thailand has maintained close diplomatic ties with Israel for decades and has attempted to delay any improvement in ties with the PLO.

The official said Arafat's aide Fayed

Massuri had tried for days to arrange the meeting between his leader and Arsa to show the PLO's support for Thailand's link with the movement.

Arsa said the meeting with Arafat was totally unexpected and he was impressed with his diplomatic skill.

A senior Foreign Ministry official said Arafat praised Thailand for its ability to remain an independent state. "Thailand can build a country from zero without outside help," Arafat was quoted as saying.

■ On the Cambodian peace process, Arsa said the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (Untac) has to decide whether a joint Thai-Japanese plan and the latest Khmer Rouge proposal are within the framework of the Paris peace agreement.

He said Thailand is trying to help overcome obstacles to the peace process.

"We cannot make a decision. It will depend on the Cambodians and Untac," he said after meeting Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan.

In a bid to end the deadlock in implementing the peace agreement, the Thai-Japanese plan took into account concerns raised by the Khmer Rouge, Arsa said.

The Khmer Rouge has refused to disarm and join in the second phase of the UN-brokered peace plan.

Thailand and Japan proposed the setting up of an Administrative Consultative Body to strengthen Cambodia's reconciliatory body, the Supreme National Council.

The Khmer Rouge accepted the proposal on condition there be subcommittees to help Untac in its mandatory supervision and control of the existing structures of the four warring factions in their controlled zones to ensure transparency of administration.

Phnom Penh has rejected the Paris proposals, saying they violate the peace agreement.

Arsa is scheduled to meet Prince Norodom Sihanouk this morning. Earlier, the prince said the election due to be held in Cambodia next year should proceed without the Khmer Rouge. Necessary, Sihanouk said if the national government continues to control 85 per cent of the territory, it would be able to implement the UN peace plan.

■ Burma yesterday criticised the West for trying to promote human rights in developing countries through "pressure and confrontation".

In a speech to the Nam summit meeting here, Burmese Foreign Minister U Ohn Gyaw said the promotion of human rights can best be achieved through appreciation of each country's individual circumstances.

"We believe that human rights cannot and should not be promoted through pressure and confrontation," he said.

Burma has been severely criticized by the West for its human rights record. The country has been ruled by a military junta since 1988 following a crackdown on pro-democracy student movements. Several hundred students and civilians were killed and thousands jailed.