

Chretien to campaign for land-mine treaty

By Jim Brown Canadian Press

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OTTAWA - PRIME Minister Jean Chretien will continue his campaign to sign up new adherents to a global land-mines treaty when he meets next week with more than 40 heads of French-speaking nations.

Economic development, culture, technology and human rights will also be on his agenda for the meeting in the Vietnamese capital of Hanoi. So will a new and more political role for La Francophonie, the international organization of francophone states.

But one thing that won't be up for discussion - at least if Ottawa can help it - is Quebec sovereignty.

"We are not going to Hanoi for the purpose of fighting Canadian battles," said one of several federal officials who held a briefing yesterday on condition of anonymity. "I can assure you that Canadian domestic issues, like separation, will not be a priority for the other 40-plus members there. They have enough problems of their own. They are not in any way interested in seeing a split-up of their individual countries."

Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard, currently on a trade mission to China, will be attending the Nov. 14-17 summit in Vietnam, as will New Brunswick Premier Ray Frenette. Both provinces will participate as part of the Canadian delegation under deals signed a decade ago.

Bouchard will act as "rapporteur" for the Canadian delegation, summarizing issues raised at the conference and the positions taken by various participants. Federal officials played down the role, saying the post is a straightforward one of presenting facts and recapitulating debate rather than pushing a political agenda. "Clearly, for us, the Quebec government has no mandate to promote the political option of its party abroad," said one official. "This political option has been submitted twice to the Quebec population and been rejected twice." Federal-provincial jockeying aside, delegates will have a full plate of international issues.

Chretien will press a number of holdouts - including Vietnam, Cambodia, Egypt and Lebanon - who have yet to join the land-mine treaty to be signed in December in Ottawa.

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