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India-Afghanistan

INDIA TO HELP MALAYSIA ON AFGHAN MEDIATING ROLE

By: R. Ravichandran

KUALA LUMPUR, June 23 (Bernama) -- Malaysia can count on India's help if it wants to play a direct mediator's role to bring about an end to the protracted conflict in Afghanistan, its outgoing High Commissioner to Malaysia, V.K Nambiar said today.

He said India, with its strong traditional and cultural links with Afghanistan, was also willing to help Malaysia in any capacity to enable Kuala Lumpur to play a mediator's role.

"Being a good friend of Malaysia and with a strong relationship, I don't see any reason why India cannot help Malaysia in this context," he told Bernama.

He was commenting on the recent call by the Afghan Charge d'affaires here, Abdul Sattar Murad to Malaysia to take up a leading role by initiating a peace conference among the warring factions in his country.

Abdul Sattar had also called on all of Afghanistan's neighbouring countries like India, Iran and Pakistan to play a role in whatever capacity to help the war-torn country achieve peace.

Nambiar, who was India's ambassador to Afghanistan prior to his Malaysian posting in 1992, said Malaysia had a strong credential in various issues concerning the Muslim world.

"Malaysia's Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is also a respected figure in the international arena and this too is a plus point for Kuala Lumpur to take up such a role," he said.

Asked what kind of help India could offer, he said India being on good terms with current Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, and also with all other former governments, would be able to advise, support, provide guidance and also provide contact to various Mujahideen (freedom fighter) factions.

Nambiar said Malaysia could also assist in the reconstruction of Afghanistan once peace prevailed.

"Malaysia can also initiate a development fund with other Asean countries to re-build Afghanistan, similar to Bosnia-Herzegovina and I believe the international community especially the European countries and United Nations would follow suit," he said.

He said Malaysia being a country with no vested interest in the Afghan conflict, was in the right position to take up such a role.

Nambiar also said Malaysia and India had voiced similar views on Afghanistan in various international forums.

"India maintained strong ties with Kabul for many centuries and continues to help the country especially in the field of education, trade and health," he said.

Nambiar also said to achieve peace, all the factions must be united and must strive for a national broad-based government, adding that national reconciliation was important for this to become a reality.

Asked why India could not play that role, he said not all the neighbours of Afghanistan would really "understand" that kind of role.

Nambiar added that the United Nations had lost its credibility in Afghanistan, thus it was proper for a third world country like Malaysia to take the initiative to tackle problems faced by another Third World nation.

-- BERNAMA

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