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Britain-Myanmar

BRITAIN SAYS ASEAN-EUROPE DIFFERENCES ON MYANMAR CAN BE RESOLVED

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 2 (Bernama) -- The differences between Asean and Europe on Myanmar's participation in the Second Asia Europe Meeting (Asem) in London next year can be resolved through "honest, open and frank negotiation", according to a high-ranking British official.

Peter Kilfoyle, the Parliamentary Secretary at the Cabinet Office, said that it has always been the case for the two regions to settle their differences through such means.

"I think the answer is a simple one. Such matters were always resolved by honest, open frank negotiation and I'm sure that will be the case. I'm absolutely sure also that in the wider scheme of things that there will always be differences of emphasis between sovereign nations," he told a news conference at the British High Commission here today.

Kilfoyle was commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement yesterday that Asean may decide to boycott the Asem if the European Union (EU) bars Myanmar from attending.

"If there is discrimination against Myanmar, it is a discrimination against Asean. You may find other countries in Asean also deciding not to attend," Dr Mahathir had said.

The Prime Minister was commenting on British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's statement in a meeting of business leaders in Singapore yesterday that Europe's recent decision to deny visas to senior Myanmar officials made their inclusion at the Asem "impossible".

Kilfoyle, who is here to learn about Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), said he hoped that like in any other differences of opinion, normal and good relations would prevail, particularly between Britain and Malaysia.

"We have a very close affinity which is being enforced over the past couple of days and I hope that it will continue to be the case," he said.

While saying that he was not aware of Cook's statement on Myanmar yesterday, Kilfoyle said it (Cook's statement) was "a reflection of the current public opinion".

Kilfoyle hoped that any "difficulties" between Asean and Europe on the issue of Myanmar "will be resolved". -- BERNAMA

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