

08 MAR 2001

Thailand-Malaysia

BANGKOK WELCOMES KL'S EFFORT FOR RECONCILIATION IN YANGON

KUALA LUMPUR, March 8 (Bernama) -- Thailand welcomed Malaysia's role in helping to strengthen national reconciliation in Myanmar, visiting Thai Foreign Minister Dr Surakiart Sathirathai said today.

He said Thailand regarded the initiatives by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Tan Sri Razali Ismail, the United Nations' special envoy to Myanmar, as a positive step towards enhancing the process.

Dr Mahathir visited Myanmar last January and held talks with Senior General Than Shwe, the chairman of the ruling State Peace and Development Council on bilateral, regional and international issues.

Speaking to reporters after holding talks with his Malaysian counterpart Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar at Wisma Putra here, Dr Surakiart said Thailand was ready to assist in the process in any way it could.

Razali was picked to spearhead efforts for reconciliation in the military-run country following a UN general assembly resolution in 1999 urging Myanmar's government to stop human rights violation and take steps to return the country to democracy.

Dr Surakiart, who was on a one-day visit, earlier met Dr Mahathir at the Prime Minister's Department in Putrajaya.

On bilateral ties, Dr Surakiart described it as important because the two countries are immediate neighbours.

He also said Thailand adhered to the principle of non-intervention under the Asean framework.

Asked if ousted Philippine president Joseph Estrada had applied for political asylum in Thailand, Dr Surakiart said: "If there is any request, it will be a surprise for me.

"I was informed that the Philippine government does not like the former president to leave the country," he said.

On talks with Syed Hamid, he said they discussed various issues and stressed the need for increased cooperation between Asean and East Asian countries.

Asean groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

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