

Syed Hamid: 'Myanmar moving in right direction'

19 AUG 2007

By M. VEERA PANDIYAN

YANGON: Malaysia is "very encouraged" by the recent political developments in Myanmar and expects the positive changes in the country to continue.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said from Malaysia's viewpoint, Myanmar was moving in the right direction.

Recalling the process of reconciliation between Myanmar's military junta and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, he said there was much scepticism from developed nations pushing for economic sanctions and "isolation" of the country.

He said when Tan Sri Razali Ismail, United Nations' special envoy to Myanmar and special

adviser to the Prime Minister was appointed to initiate the talks, many Western countries and their media had asked how much could he achieve.

"But step by step, he has succeeded in bringing the two sides together," he said, adding that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad played "a catalytic role" in the delicate process by impressing upon Myanmar's leaders that the best way of conflict resolution was through interaction and dialogue.

"The fact that they have released Suu Kyi (from 19 months of house arrest on May 6) shows that they have the intention of resolving the internal conflicts and differences," he told Malaysian journalists here yesterday before Dr Mahathir's arrival here for a

two-day working visit.

Asked to comment on Suu Kyi's request to meet Dr Mahathir, he said there would not have been any problems if there were no "sensitivities" attached.

He said the Prime Minister was in Myanmar at the invitation of the government and the decision was dependent on the leaders.

"If Suu Kyi wants to see Dr Mahathir and speaks to the government and they say that it can be arranged, then there is no problem," he said.

Meanwhile, Bernama reported that Dr Mahathir was met on arrival at the Yangon International Airport by Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Senior General Than Shwe.