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NAM-Afghanistan

AFGHANISTAN CONFIDENT OF CONTINUED AID FROM INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 24 (Bernama) -- Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai said today his government is confident the international community will continue to help his country although the world's attention has shifted to Iraq.

He said he had received firm assurances for continued assistance from US President George W. Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and from countries like Germany and The Netherlands.

"As far as Afghanistan is concerned, the attention of donor nations will remain with Afghanistan," he told Malaysian journalists on the sidelines of the 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit.

He was asked whether the looming US-led attack on Iraq would shift the international community's focus from Afghanistan.

Karzai said the international community pledged US\$1.8 billion (RM6.8 billion) last year and a substantial part of the amount had been extended to Afghanistan through the United Nations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Afghanistan needs US\$15 billion (RM57 billion) to US\$20 billion (RM76 billion) for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the war-ravaged country over the next 10 years.

At the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghans in Tokyo in January last year attended by 61 countries, including Malaysia, the European Union and international organisations pledged to contribute US\$4.5 billion (RM17.1 billion).

Malaysia, on its part, had honoured its promise to provide US\$500,000 (RM1.9 billion).

Karzai said his government was happy with the ongoing reconstruction activities in the war-torn country with donor countries showing interests to build highways.

He said the US, Japan and Saudi Arabia were involved in the construction of major highways while Italy had promised to build a new highway from Kabul to central Afghanistan.

The World Bank and the European Union (EU) were working on other highways.

On Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad assuming the NAM Chairmanship, Karzai said he was confident Malaysia would provide a dynamic leadership to the movement in the next three years.

"I'm sure Malaysia will provide NAM a dynamic leadership," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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