

14 JAN 2003

NAM-Afghanistan

AFGHANISTAN TO RAISE TERRORISM, RECONSTRUCTION ISSUES AT KL NAM

By: R. Ravichandran

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 14 (Bernama) -- Emerging from 20 years of war and internal conflicts, Afghanistan is expected to participate actively at next month's 13th Non-Aligned Summit (NAM), raising issues on terrorism and the participation of the international community in its ongoing reconstruction of the country.

Afghanistan Embassy Head of Mission in Malaysia Amanullah Jayhoon said his country would also touch on other global problems affecting developing countries such as globalisation, poverty and trade.

Jayhoon said Afghanistan is expected to be represented at the highest level of the government at the six-day conference from Feb 20 to 25.

"We will take a very active role and are hopeful that our Head of State (President Hamid Karzai) will be in KL (for NAM summit) because if NAM does not help, chances are we will go back to the old situation," he told BERNAMA in an interview at his office here.

Karzai's attendance at NAM, if it becomes a reality, would mean the first major meeting he would attend outside the United Nations (UN) since assuming office as President in June last year.

The 44-year-old man was first named the interim leader of the country for six months after the ouster of Taliban in November 2001 following the US-led campaign after the Sept 11 terror attack.

In June last year, Karzai was elected as Afghanistan President for a two-year term by the Loya Jirga or Grand Council-- a traditional gathering of Afghan's tribal leaders.

Afghanistan, once a launching pad for terrorism activities of the Al-Qaeda movement with the support of now ousted Taliban regime, is still battling the remnants of Al-Qaeda and Taliban while working hard to rebuild the country.

About US\$15 billion to US\$20 billion are needed for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country in the next 10 years.

At the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghans meeting in Tokyo in Jan 2002 attended by 61 countries including Malaysia, the European Union and international organisations, pledges totalling US\$4.5 billion were made, of which, US\$1.8 billion had been fulfilled.

Malaysia, on its part, had honoured its promise to contribute US\$500,000.

Replying to a question, Jayhoon said Afghanistan had attended all the NAM Summits, even during the Soviet Union's occupation and under Taliban rule.

Afghanistan itself was once a victim of the Cold War rivalry. Soviet's occupation between 1979 and 1989 resulted in the death of some 1.5 million people and millions more became refugees while the subsequent civil war during the Mujahiddin rule (Sept 1992 to 1996) caused another 50,000 deaths.

The then President Prof Burhanuddin Rabbani, the United Nations-recognised government of Afghanistan during the Taliban regime, led Afghan's delegation in the last NAM summit in Durban, South Africa in Sept 1998.

Afghanistan, a founding member of NAM, attended the Bandung Conference of Asian and African states in April 1955 and also participated in the first NAM summit in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in Sept 1961.

Afghan's delegation to the Bandung conference, which paved the way for

the formation of NAM, was led by the then deputy prime minister and foreign minister Sardar Mohammed Naim Khan and the Belgrade Summit by the then prime minister Sardar Mohammed Daud.

"Besides attending the summit, he (President Karzai) will take the opportunity to have bilateral meetings with the Malaysian leadership and leaders of other countries," he said.

Jayhoon, an aide to Rabbani during the Jakarta NAM summit in 1992, also noted the active role NAM members played including Malaysia at numerous NAM meetings to oppose the Soviet occupation and to bring peace to the Central Asian country of some 22 million people.

The NAM, which has 114 members now, was formed at the height of the Cold War by countries wishing to be free from the influence of the United States-led Western Bloc and the then Soviet Union-controlled Eastern Bloc.

On Malaysia's leadership of NAM, Jayhoon said he was confident that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would steer the movement into achieving its goals and play a positive role in championing the causes of developing Third World countries.

He said although NAM's role had changed very much in the post Cold-War era and in an unipolar world, the movement was very much relevant in finding solutions to various global problems such as terrorism and poverty eradication.

"Still a lot of problems (besetting NAM members) (but) with one voice, cooperation and cohesion, these problems can be solved," said Jayhoon, who is heading the mission since the last five months after former ambassador Abdul Sattar Murad left for a new posting.

For NAM related stories see also www.nam2003.com

-- BERNAMA

RV AZZ TS