

KL wants actions threatening peace in region to end

PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia told North Korea yesterday to stop the nuclear tests.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said North Korea should not take action that could destabilise the region and affect long-term peace and prosperity.

Syed Hamid said: "We do not believe that the nuclear test undertaken by North Korea will help in creating an environment that can contribute to peace and security in the region.

"While we are trying to resuscitate the six-party talks, we should proceed with dialogues and negotiations. Any action to jeopardise or frustrate the talks will not create a good atmosphere.

"We believe in a total ban and move towards disarmament of all forms of nuclear weapons.

"I hope North Korea will stop its nuclear tests and will not take action that can jeopardise the long-term interest for a peaceful and stable region."

He said this after meeting with Benita Ferraro Waldner, the European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy at his office.

North Korea conducted an underground nuclear test yesterday. South Korea's military ordered the army to step up a state of alert after Pyongyang announced its first-ever nuclear test, which brought unusual criticism from fellow communist nation China.

The White House branded the act "provocative" and said it expected the UN Security Council to take immediate action.

Syed Hamid said the six-party talks should commence speedily.

"North Korea has always said that as long as there are financial sanctions against it, the security of the country is under threat and it has the right to self-defence.

"God forbid. If everyone takes the right of self-preservation through nuclear weapons, the whole world will be destroyed. They should look at the various options available and provide that small window to commence negotiations. This will be good for the global community," he said.

Syed Hamid also said Russia and China could try to convince North Korea to stop further tests.

"There are enough problems facing the global community and we don't need another to cause any more hardship."

On his meeting with Waldner, Syed Hamid said Malaysia agreed to extend visa arrangements to members of the European Union so long as Malaysians were accorded similar treatment.

"It has to be based on reciprocity. The same type of treatment we are giving to current members of the EU can be extended to other new members so long as they give that facility to our citizens," he said.