

Newspaper	NEW STRAITS TIMES
Date	09 MARCH 2017

MALAYSIANS IN NORTH KOREA

'OUR PRIORITY IS SAFETY OF 11'

Not our intention to pick a fight with North Korea, says Najib

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday reiterated that Malaysia's immediate priority was to secure the safety of the 11 Malaysians in North Korea.

Najib, who emphasised that Malaysia was not looking for a fight with North Korea, said Malaysia had its "own ways" to secure the release.

"We have our ways. Our priority is to ensure the safety of our people there."

He said should negotiations

take place between Malaysia and North Korea, they would be held behind closed doors.

"I cannot reveal everything and I should not reveal anything in the interest of the welfare of our citizens.

"Sometimes, these things have to be done in secrecy to achieve the desired result.

"We are one of the few nations which are fair and friendly with North Korea.

"We didn't pick a fight with them. It was never our intention. When a murder is committed and especially if chemical weapons are used, we are duty-bound to protect the interests of our nation."

Najib said diplomatic ties with North Korea would not be severed as the government needed a channel to negotiate directly with North Korea, and that the Malaysian embassy in Pyongyang would not be shut down.

He said despite not being al-

lowed to fly home, the Malaysians there could move freely and conduct their daily activities as usual.

"There is no reason why we should worry about their safety," he said at the Parliament lobby here yesterday.

Najib, who chaired a National Security Council (NSC) meeting on Tuesday to discuss the issue, said Malaysia would look into possible demands by North Korea following its move to keep the Malaysians in the country.

He said NSC wanted police to continue investigating the murder of Kim Jong-nam.

He advised Malaysians not to visit North Korea.

On whether Malaysia would seek China's help to resolve the crisis, Najib declined to disclose details.

He said Malaysia would look at the latest developments before considering to raise the issue at the United Nations.



We are one of the few nations which are fair and friendly with North Korea. We didn't pick a fight with them. It was never our intention.

"There are a few things we have to do first. There will be follow-up action, but this case is sensitive and involves the security of Malaysians."

Najib said relatives of Jong-

nam, who was assassinated in Kuala Lumpur on Feb 13, may be too scared to come forward to provide DNA samples.

"Maybe they are scared to come forward."

Najib said the authorities were still waiting for the body to be identified as no one had come forward to provide a DNA sample, or to identify the body. In his blog, Najib said the government was identifying and analysing the real demands of the North Korean government.

"This is a sensitive issue. Hence, the government (will) ensure that negotiations and discussions are done secretly.

"What I can reveal at the moment is that the government is identifying and analysing the real demands of North Korea in imposing bans on Malaysia.

"*Inshaallah*, the conflict will be resolved and our citizens, who are being held there, could return safely."

NST- 9/3/2017