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MALAYSIANS IN N. KOREA

NEGOTIATIONS WILL HAPPEN 'WHEN TIME COMES', SAYS PM

Najib says he will make announcement once there are new updates

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MALAYSIA will conduct formal negotiations "when the time comes" to free the remaining nine Malaysians stranded in North Korea, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday.

He reiterated that the nine were safe and that there was no reason to worry about their well-being.

The prime minister, however, declined to comment on whether informal negotiations between Malaysia and North Korea had already taken place here.

"I will make an announcement once there are new updates (on the negotiations)," Najib said at the Parliament lobby here.

The two countries have been embroiled in a diplomatic spat

over the Feb 13 killing in Kia2 of Kim Jong-nam, the estranged half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.



The incident sparked a diplomatic stand-off, as both countries slapped travel bans on each other's citizens, and expelled the other's ambassadors.

Najib, however, defused the tension after making it clear that Malaysia would not sever ties with the reclusive state.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman had said on Saturday that North Korea had in-

dicated it was ready to start negotiations.

"They want to start talking. We do not know what their demands are... we need to figure out what we can do to get the best results," he had said.

Anifah had also said many countries had offered to mediate between the two, but that "no country will act as a third party" or mediator.

Jong-nam, who had been living in Macau and had been known to criticise his family's regime, was killed using the highly lethal VX nerve agent.

The chemical is classified by the United Nations as a weapon of mass destruction.

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