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PM: Malaysia-North Korea ties not to be decided hastily

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by P PREM KUMAR

MALAYSIA will take "one step at a time" in reviewing bilateral ties with North Korea, amid recent fall-out between the two countries after the death of Kim Jong-nam last month.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Razak said yesterday that the government will never allow any external parties to insult Malaysia, or to freely spark problems within the country.

"We will see, we will take (it) one step at a time," Najib told reporters in Parliament when asked on the next course of action following North Korea's Ambassador to Malaysia Kang Chol's remarks.

Najib also said Malaysia is not expecting an apology from North Korea, due to Kang's statement blaming the government for the death of Jong-nam, the half brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

"We are not getting anything, we don't expect anything," said Najib, while adding that the decision to expel Kang was made following



Bernama

Kang (second from right), in his translated comments, says he is leaving the country as the Malaysian government has declared him persona non grata

North Korea's refusal to withdraw the statements.

"If they (North Korea) make any hasty accusations and it is unsubstantiated, they should ask for forgiveness and withdraw their statement.

"If they refuse to do so, based on the principles, we have taken an action to declare him persona non grata," said Najib.

On Saturday, Malaysia issued a notice for Kang to leave the country in 48 hours, after declaring him persona non grata. The deadline expired as of 6pm yesterday.

Kang had alleged that the conduct of the investigation into the death of Jong-nam on Feb 13 by two female suspects, indicated that the

Malaysian government had something to hide.

Kang further alleged that local authorities had colluded with external authorities, such as South Korea, to defame his country.

North Korea maintains the stance in its unverified conclusion that Jong-nam died because of a heart attack, and

not due to the VX nerve agent as declared by the police and health authorities.

Persona non grata literally means "person not appreciated". A person declared as such by the receiving state is barred from entering or remaining in the country. It is the most serious form of disapproval that a country can apply to foreign diplomats.

It is also often used to express displeasure at the conduct or policies of the sending state.

Meanwhile, *Bernama* reported that Kang and his family members were at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport to take a flight to Beijing (Malaysia Airlines MH360), which left at 6.25pm yesterday.

Kang, in his translated comments, said he was leaving the country as the Malaysian government had declared him persona non grata.

He also expressed grave concern over the "extreme measures" taken by the Malaysian government, saying it did great harm to the bilateral relations, which had a history of 40 years.