

Anifah Prepared To Discuss With Suu Kyi on Northern Rakhine State Issue
Bernama
Dec 15, 2016

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 15 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman is prepared to discuss with his Myanmar counterpart, Aung San Suu Kyi on how Malaysia can assist Myanmar in finding a just, expeditious and durable solution to the protracted issue in the northern Rakhine state.

The Foreign Ministry, in responding to an article "Myanmar's Snub to Malaysia's Megaphone Diplomacy," said Malaysia was concerned that if the crisis in northern Rakhine state was not addressed urgently by the Myanmar government, it would impact the security and stability of region, including Malaysia.

"The exodus of more refugees to neighbouring countries, including Malaysia, would witness a repeat of the 2015 boat people crisis," it said in a statement Thursday.

Recalling the 2015 boat people crisis, Malaysia led by Anifah played an instrumental role by swiftly convening a tripartite meeting in Wisma Putra with Indonesia and Thailand in May 2015 to discuss and resolve the issue, it said.

The outcome of the meeting saw Malaysia and Indonesia agreeing to provide humanitarian assistance and temporary shelter to the 7,000 boat people stranded along the three countries' maritime borders while awaiting resettlement or repatriation, it said.

"Malaysia's leading role in this instance led to a resolution of the crisis and saved innocent lives," the ministry said.

The Foreign Ministry stressed that was why Malaysia viewed the current situation in the northern Rakhine state as no longer an 'internal affair' but one of regional consequence.

ASEAN member states as a community of nations had a responsibility to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of people in accordance with the ASEAN Charter and the Charter of the United Nations as well as the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, it said.

The ministry said it was in this context that Malaysia, as an ASEAN member state, was taking a strong position on the issue.

"Malaysia needs to speak out on issues regarding gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms as it is the right thing to do," it said.

On claims that Malaysia's recent actions were "unASEAN-like" and might jeopardise any further possibility of Malaysia playing a credible role towards a long term solution in Rakhine state, the ministry said it believed it was due to Malaysia's vocal position on the issue that Myanmar would host an ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat on Dec 19 to discuss the situation.

"Myanmar's willingness to address the criticism head-on is a change of tact for the country, as was the change in Malaysia's tone in dealing with Myanmar," it said.

"We welcome this positive development," the ministry added.

-- BERNAMA

Copyright © 216 BERNAMA

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v8/newsindex.php?id=1311885>