

## **Malaysia-North Korea Ties Not Severed**

**From Sh Nur Shahrizad Sy Mohamed Shaher**

CHENNAI, March 31 (Bernama) -- Malaysia did not sever relations with North Korea after the republic fulfilled the demands made in the negotiation process which led to the release of nine Malaysian nationals who were detained in Pyongyang for more than nine months recently.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said although faced with problems, the settlement reached had fulfilled two objectives of the negotiations stipulated by the government.

The two objectives concerned were to ensure the safety of all the nine Malaysian nationals detained and to guarantee that national sovereignty was not ignored by anyone.

"Thus, we hope North Korea will no longer raise such problems as this could jeopardise diplomatic relations between the two countries," he told Malaysian reporters in Chennai at the conclusion of his two-day visit today.

The Prime Minister was on a six-day official visit to India, and would proceed to New Delhi later this evening.

The tense diplomatic relations between Malaysia and North Korea eased slightly in the last two months when the nine Malaysian nationals, who were earlier prohibited from leaving North Korea following the diplomatic tiff between Kuala Lumpur and Pyongyang, arrived here safely this morning.

Tension between Kuala Lumpur and Pyongyang arose following the killing of Kim Jong-nam, 46, the elder brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un at the KL 2 international airport (klia2), here on Feb 13.

Commenting further, Najib said the committee that was set up had to go through numerous problems including having to attend meetings as early as 3 am besides changes being made at the last minute by North Korea.

"However, eventually the agreements reached had been respected by North Korea and all the nine Malaysian nationals had returned home safely," he said.

On whether relations between the two nations could be restored, Najib said both parties must hold to the diplomatic principles and respect the Vienna Convention if they were to ensure that diplomatic ties could be resumed.

Meanwhile, when asked on the fate of the two men who were believed to be the suspects in the killing of Jong-nam who was said to be hiding in the North Korean embassy, Najib said both of them were believed to have returned to the country of their origin.

However, both men, namely the Second Secretary at the North Korean Embassy in Malaysia, Hyon Kwang-song, 44, and the other who was an employee of North Korean Airline, Kim Uk-il, 37 had been interrogated by the police earlier.

The matter was however part of the agreement reached with North Korea, that is, the police must be allowed to interview and interrogate them and North Korea had allowed this to be carried out, he added.

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