

Malaysia A Friendly Nation, Expects Mutual Respect - Ahmad Zahid

KUALA LUMPUR, March 6 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is a friendly nation and expects mutual respect from other countries, said Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

The Deputy Prime Minister said Malaysia in no way wished to find faults in diplomatic ties with any country.

"But if there is any country which makes Malaysia the focus of their attacks, saying things like it had manipulated a murder, then Malaysia should review diplomatic ties with that country.

"In fact, Malaysia should send a clear message on its displeasure to that country," he told reporters after the opening of the first meeting of the fifth session of the 13th Parliament by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Muhammad V today.

He was commenting on the government's decision last Saturday to expel North Korean Ambassador Kang Chol after the latter made wild and baseless claims about Kuala Lumpur in connection with the investigations into the murder Kim Jong-nam, the half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2 (klia2) on Feb 13.

Ahmad Zahid said a decision to expel an ambassador was rarely made except when the honour and sovereignty of the nation were threatened.

"I had said several times that we do not have a hidden agenda, and in fact the investigations into the case were conducted professionally. We have enough expert personnel to conduct the post-mortem and police investigations," he said.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said all decisions made by Malaysia were based on the law and North Korea must respect that.

He said other nations would make the same decision if there were parties which tried to interfere in matters affecting their honour and sovereignty.

"There is still room for diplomacy. There is still room for us to make sure that the foreign and the home ministries discuss it. Do whatever it takes but what is most important is that the people unite in defending our stand," he said.

Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Reezal Merican Naina Merican said the murder case had affected diplomatic relations between Kuala Lumpur and Pyongyang and the ties would not be the same as before.

He added that the government's decision to expel the ambassador was in accordance with international and Malaysian laws.

Last Saturday, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman announced that the Malaysian government had declared Kang Chol a 'persona non grata' and gave him 48 hours to leave the country.

The term 'persona non grata' refers to the status given to a person who is unacceptable or unwelcome.

Prior to that, the Malaysian government had announced that effective March 6, North Korean citizens are required to apply for a visa to enter the country.

It was reported that Jong-nam was waiting for his flight to Macau at klia2 on Feb 13 when two women suddenly wiped his face with a liquid which was later identified as the VX nerve agent.

Jong-nam reportedly sought help at a customer service counter at the airport and was rushed to Putrajaya Hospital but died on the way.

He had used a passport bearing the name Kim Chol.

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