

North Korea's Decision Only Worsens The Situation - Najib

By Azeman Ariffin

JAKARTA, March 7 (Bernama) -- North Korea's decision to hold Malaysians hostage has only worsened the situation, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said.

He said such action to prevent Malaysian citizens from leaving the country, was indeed unacceptable.

While describing the current relationship between the two countries as tense, the prime minister said the North Korea's provocation had also violated the international law.

As such, Najib said Malaysia would do anything to save the lives of its citizens in North Korea and that the National Security Council would convene an emergency meeting this evening to discuss further action.

Speaking to reporters here, Najib said the Inspector-General of Police had also been instructed to prevent all North Korean nationals in Malaysia from leaving the country until all Malaysians in North Korea were freed.

North Korea on Tuesday announced that Malaysian citizens in North Korea were temporarily banned from leaving the country until the safety of its diplomats and citizens in Malaysia was fully guaranteed.

This followed the Malaysian police investigations into the assassination of Kim Jong-nam, the half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, at the KL International Airport 2 (klia2) recently.

Najib said although Malaysia had no interest in North Korea, it is Malaysia's practice to maintain good relationship with other countries.

"Hence, I call on North Korean leadership to immediately allow Malaysian citizens to leave North Korea to avoid making things worse," he said.

Najib is in Jakarta to attend the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Summit which ended today.

The prime minister said Malaysia was merely discharging its responsibility to investigate a crime which occurred on Malaysian soil, involving a North Korean.

"We have not taken any negative action against North Korea. What we are facing now is the result of their action in assassinating their own citizen in Malaysia, on Malaysian soil, using a strictly banned chemical weapon.

"When a crime occurred in Malaysia, we have the responsibility to fully investigate it to determine what happened and to take the perpetrators to justice. That is the rule of law which he have accepted and adopted all this while," he said.

On the possibility that North Korea would want to end its diplomatic ties with Malaysia, Najib said Malaysia had no idea of what was inside the North Korean leader's mind, but what was important was for all to respect the rules of law.

He said the priority for Malaysia now was to ensure safety of its citizens and that it still required a communication channel to liaise with the North Korean government.

"They cannot act at their whims and fancy, violating the international law to hold Malaysians hostage, it is indeed unacceptable not only by Malaysia, but also the world," he added.

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