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APEC-NEWS-RESPONSE

APEC BUSINESS SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS REJECT GORE'S STATEMENT

By: S.Durga Varma

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 17 (Bernama) -- Several participants of the APEC Business Summit say US Vice-President Al Gore's public support for the so-called reform movement in this country is inappropriate and rude.

Dr Shafiq Sit Abdullah, executive director of the Apec Business Advisory Council, said Gore perhaps did not have an idea of the positive mood at the summit.

"I believe he realised this when the audience did not applaud as one would normally after such an important speech," he said today.

Gore, addressing the business summit at a dinner last night, described those involved in the "reformasi" movement as "the brave people of Malaysia" outraging many of those present.

Dr Shafiq said: "I believe the mood will change for the better. There has been too much incorrect reporting in some media in the US. This perhaps shaped his misinformed statement.

"At a time when we are opening Apec to the rest of the world, it is sad that the vice-president cannot adopt a more statesmanlike approach to things."

Noel Gould, a member of the US-Asean Business Council, said Malaysia had been a "great" host for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

It had been "very open to all viewpoints, very strong mutual respect and collaboration in keeping with Apec's mission.

"It is unfortunate that the vice-president took a dramatically different approach," he said.

A Chinese delegate said Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had won many new supporters and Gore had "basically shot himself in the foot. It was both inappropriate and the wrong time on a wrong subject matter."

And a Canadian delegate said the fact that the other leaders stayed on for dinner while Gore left showed that Malaysia's gesture was appreciated but the vice-president's statement was not well received.

A US sponsor of the business summit said it would "definitely write in to the White House to show our displeasure with the vice-president's statement."

Said a participant of the VTM global interview: "How can anyone be so rude. Al Gore's statement was totally out of context. Maybe he had no knowledge of how successful the business summit has been,"

Asked for her reaction, a US delegate at the dinner said: "What can I say. I am embarrassed."

A foreign reporter likened Gore's action to "one of the Apec leaders going to Washington and promoting Ken Starr's report at the Apec Summit as an example of the rule of law.

"I could not believe my ears. He was so out of synch with the mood of the business community here from all over APEC. Al Gore overlooked the fact that the summit was attended by CEOs from all over the APEC region and not only from the US," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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