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APEC SHOULD NOT IGNORE POLITICAL ISSUES, SAYS CHANDRA MUZAFFAR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 14 (Bernama) -- The ongoing APEC meetings here should not ignore political issues as they are interrelated with economic matters, President of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST) Dr Chandra Muzaffar said today.

"We agree that APEC is basically a forum which focuses on economic cooperation and economic issues but in reality, you cannot separate economic issues from political issues," he said at a news conference here.

The joint press conference was called by the Council of the Malaysian People's Movement for Justice and the Coalition For People's Democracy.

It was attended by Gerak Chairman Datuk Haji Fadzil Noor, who is also PAS president, Gagasan chairman Tian Chua, and other leaders and representatives of Gerak.

JUST is one of the 29 members of Gerak which comprises political parties, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and individuals.

Dr Muzaffar said the political parties and the NGOs were concerned about global injustices, including issues connected with the role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the recent financial crisis in East Asia.

"We are concerned about the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few at the global level and its consequences for the countries in the South," he said.

While they were concerned about global injustices, they were also concerned about injustices within Malaysia, he said.

"You cannot be concerned about global injustices and not take a position on injustices within the country and what has happened to (former Deputy Prime Minister) Anwar Ibrahim and all the other issues related to it," he said.

Dr Muzaffar said the way the government was helping big corporations during the economic downturn was also causing concern.

Earlier, Fadzil and Tian read out a joint press statement in Bahasa Malaysia and English respectively.

Among other things Gerak and Gagasan called on the government to make public the report on the assault on Anwar and mete out punishment against whoever was responsible.

They also called for the Anwar trial and other cases connected with the Anwar episode to be conducted in accordance with the highest standard of justice and fairness.

They asked that all Internal Security Act (ISA) detainees be freed and called on the government to ensure that the people are free to speak, organise, associate and assemble in a peaceful manner in pursuit of their democratic goals and ideals.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad should also prepare to hold a general election as soon as possible, they said.

-- BERNAMA

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