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APEC-NEWS-GOH LEAD
STICK TO APEC MATTERS, SAYS GOH

By: Tan Hock Guan

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 17 -- (Bernama) -- Attacks against US Vice-President Al Gore, whose remarks last night in support of the "reformasi" movement have caused a stir, were stepped up today with Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong saying Apec should stick to economic issues.

"Leaders who want to bring up political issues should do so at bilateral meetings rather than using the regional economic forum," he told reporters after a bilateral meeting with Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai.

"That's the American style and we have to accept it, he said.

In a clear interference in Malaysia's domestic political affairs, Gore said those involved in the reformation movement were "brave" people, irking the many Malaysians present at the dinner.

Among them was Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz who described Gore's speech as most disgusting while the local business community expressed outrage saying Gore was rude and arrogant.

Goh said that instead of bringing up political issues, the Apec leadership should make a difference and stick to Apec matters at the meeting.

"There are leaders who want to comment on other countries but they should do it quietly on a bilateral basis," he said.

Asked whether Gore was out of line, Goh said it was up to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad "to decide how to handle the situation."

"I can understand why the Prime Minister is upset, just as the Americans would be if Dr Mahathir were to comment on American politics," he said.

"We are here for a particular purpose, but politics has got in the way of Apec.

Goh said that it was inappropriate to bring up political and domestic issues at the Apec meeting.

"The appropriate forum to bring them up is bilateral meetings."

Asked if Gore's remarks were aimed at inciting a revolution in Malaysia, he said: "I dont think it is to incite a revolution, (that) is too far-fetched."

--BERNAMA

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