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Conference-Malaysia

NO SPECIFIC TOPICS ON MALAYSIA'S JUDICIARY AT C'WEALTH LAW CONFERENCE

PETALING JAYA, Sept 12 (Bernama) -- Despite Malaysia being in the international limelight over several highly-publicised court cases, there will be no specific topics or declaration on the country's judiciary and human rights at the 12th Commonwealth Law Conference beginning here tomorrow.

Newly-elected Commonwealth Law Association (CLA) president Datuk Dr Cyrus Das said it was impossible to discuss domestic issues of a particular country in an international conference involving 54 countries.

"It's not fair to others who have come all the way and have to listen to domestic issues. We are here to discuss standard and common issues," he told reporters after the CLA's triennial meeting here today.

He, however, did not rule out the possibility of the delegates raising questions on Malaysia's judiciary and human rights as there would be ample time for questions during topic discussions.

He said this in response to questions whether the jailing of Far Eastern Economic Review correspondent Murray Hiebert and the trial of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim would be discussed at the conference.

The four-day conference to be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tomorrow will be attended by 1,318 delegates comprising lawyers, judges and legal scholars including about 500 overseas participants.

Among the 150 speakers are Nobel prize winner Wole Soyinka of Nigeria, lawyer for former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, Britain's Master of the Rolls Lord Woolf and Zimbabwean chief justice Anthony Gubbay.

Others are former Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Musa Hitam, former Inspector-General of Police Tun Hanif Omar and Singapore's opposition politician J.B.Jeyaretnam.

Outgoing CLA president Rod Hansen of New Zealand said the jailing of Hiebert could be raised as it had caused some concern to lawyers and journalists.

"But we are here not to discuss domestic issues but international issues. Domestic issues are part of the bigger picture...the delegates can discuss about it by comparing experiences in their own country," he said.

"We don't spend a lot of time on reaching consensus on specific issues," Hansen said.

Cyrus said six key issues would be deliberated at 34 sessions. They are environmental protection, human rights and the rule of law in the 21st century, criminal liability, legal profession, international law and international dealings and corporate governance.

The former Bar Council president is the first Asian to be elected as the president of CLA since its inception in 1947.

He will serve in the post till the next CLA meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe in 2001.

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