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APEC-Syed Hamid

APEC FMs AGREE HUMAN DISASTER MUST BE AVOIDED IN AFGHANISTAN

By: Mohd Kamel Othman

SHANGHAI, Oct 18 (Bernama) -- Apec (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) Foreign Ministers have agreed that a human disaster arising from United States led air strikes on Afghanistan should be avoided.

They felt that if the strikes to hunt down the terrorists suspected to be hiding in Afghanistan was something that could not be avoided, then at least the sufferings of the civilian population should be at a minimum level.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said his Apec colleagues felt that all forms of military action against Afghanistan should be settled as soon as possible.

"It will become more dangerous if (the air strikes on Afghanistan) continue into the month of Ramadan. The feelings and emotions of Muslims will be stirred and give rise to many problems," he said. (Ramadan starts on Nov 17)

Syed Hamid was briefing Malaysian reporters on the APEC FMs special session on the issue of the terrorist threat here today.

Syed Hamid said the United States should understand and take into account what the APEC FMs had said at this meeting which was not to oppose their action but more towards safeguarding the feelings of Muslims as a whole.

"We cannot resolve the problem of terrorism by declaring war. Many other steps will have to be taken. That is why Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had openly said an international conference should be held to discuss and resolve the issue of terrorism," he said.

"We must eliminate terrorism from becoming a threat to world peace," he said.

He said his Apec colleagues felt that the terrorist threat was a new phenomenon and hence there was a need for international cooperation to fight terrorism.

Syed Hamid said the APEC FMs also felt efforts should be made to review the role of the United Nations in the context of fighting international terrorists.

"Malaysia wants this effort to be made by the UN Security Council and there should not be any favouritism," he said.

At the special session, the APEC FMs had also conveyed to the US Secretary of State Colin Powell the message that the longer his country's military action against Afghanistan lasts the more civilians would be affected.

Asked about Powell's reaction, Syed Hamid said, "Powell made his statement and gave a briefing on the latest developments in Pakistan and we (Apec FMs) gave our respective views."

"Meetings like this will only be meaningful if all members expressed their views," he said.

-- BERNAMA
MKO KHY AAM