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APEC-TAIWAN

CHINA REGRETS TAIWAN'S DECISION NOT TO SEND REPRESENTATIVE TO APEC

By: Mohd Kamel Othman

SHANGHAI, Oct 19 (Bernama) -- China has expressed regret over the decision by Taiwan not to send its representative to the two-day Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Meeting beginning here tomorrow (Saturday).

As the host of this year's APEC meetings, China welcomes the participation of all APEC members and has offered corresponding protocol and conveniences to all members in accordance with the principle of equity and politeness, said a spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement here today.

"China has repeatedly expressed its welcome to Chinese Taipei to participate in the APEC Leaders Meeting in Shanghai and other APEC activities and has issued invitations."

The spokesperson pointed out that APEC's relevant memorandum of understanding has provided explicit provisions on Taiwan's candidate to the APEC Leaders Meeting and that a practice has been formed over the previous meetings.

"Chinese Taipei has failed to select a candidate that conforms to these provisions and practice. We regret over this," the spokesperson said.

Taiwan has claimed that China did not send a formal invitation for the APEC meeting here.

Taiwan president Chen Shui-Bian has decided to send former vice-president Li Yuan-Zu as his representative at the APEC summit here but the decision needs China's blessings.

Li, Taiwan's vice president from 1990-1996 and a criminal law expert, was chosen because anti-terrorism would be the main issue to be discussed by the leaders.

Beijing has forced Taiwan to limit its representation at previous APEC Summits to a cabinet minister or a business leader.

Last year, the Taiwan Central Bank governor Perng Fai-Nan led the island's delegation to the APEC Summit in Brunei.

Taiwan takes part in APEC meetings as an "economy" under the title "Chinese Taipei" -- an arrangement designed to overcome China's objection to the recognition of Taiwan as a separate state.

Taiwan and China split in 1949 following a civil war, but Beijing still regards the island as a breakaway province that must eventually be brought back to the fold, by force if necessary.

APEC groups Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, the U.S. and Vietnam.

Meanwhile, leaders from APEC member countries started arriving at this East China commercial hub since Thursday. Among them were US President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will arrive just after midnight today.

The leaders will discuss economic issues as well as anti-terrorism in the wake of the Sept 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. --

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