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## Banks directed to freeze terrorist-linked accounts

Saiful Azhar Abdullah

BANK Negara has directed all banks to trace and freeze the accounts and assets of terrorist groups and their members as the Government has joined the global effort to fight terrorism.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said here yesterday the central bank had issued a directive to this effect to the banks.

He said this after the second executive session of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting which was attended by 32 heads of government, including Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

A list of bank accounts of terrorist organisations and individuals linked to these groups was distributed to them recently.

The list was furnished by the United Nations Security Council under Resolution 1373 (2001) based on the one prepared by the United States after the terrorist attacks on Sept 11.

Under the resolution, all states shall freeze funds and other financial assets or economic resources of persons who commit or attempt to commit terrorist acts or participate in or facilitate the commission of such acts.

These involve entities owned or controlled directly or indirectly by people committing acts of terrorism or entities acting on behalf of such persons. The resolution includes action on funds derived or generated from property owned or controlled directly or indirectly by such persons.

However, Syed Hamid said he was unaware whether Malaysian banks had detected such accounts.

On whether the directive would also affect local groups such as Kumpulan Militan Malaysia, he said it would affect all groups linked with terrorism.

On the session, he said many leaders echoed Malaysia's views calling on the world not to link terrorism with Islam.

"The leaders agreed with our views that terrorism should not be linked to one religion, culture and race. They also accepted the proposals of the Commonwealth Committee on Terrorism on the plan of action to fight terrorism."

He said discussions at the executive sessions gave leaders opportunities to give their frank views on terrorism.

Many echoed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call for a definition of terrorism.

Guyana's President Bharrat Jagdeo, according to Syed Hamid, said the problem of terrorism started well before the Sept 11 attacks.

Jagdeo said about two million people in poor countries succumbed yearly to malaria and 'no one cares'.

"This is a double standard ... because of terrorism, the world provides billions for Afghanistan while no one cares about the two million people dying of malaria. It is time to stop focusing on one issue."

saiful@nstp.com.my

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