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Forum-terrorism

TACKLE ROOT CAUSE OF TERRORISM, SAYS AMERICAN LAWYER

PULAU PANGKOR, Sept 7 (Bernama) -- An American lawyer, who had participated in various peace talks worldwide, told an international forum here that the root cause of terrorism is not religious or cultural but political.

Paul S. Reichler said that terrorism could only be stopped if the root cause was addressed as every specific act of terrorism had some political connections.

"The cause of Sept 11 is not because of Islam affiliation, but rather political, especially when certain groups of people are unjustly treated," he said at the Asian Global Leadership Forum: An initiative for Peace in Paradise held four days before the first anniversary of the attacks in the United States.

Reichler said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had emphasised this point to U.S. President George Bush during their meeting in Washington earlier this year.

"But the United States is not hunting down the root cause of the terrorist attack but is instead going after Iraq," he said.

He was responding to panelists discussing "Snapshots of the Political and Security Landscape: The Political and Security Imperatives.

Reichler, who negotiated the agreement between the government of Nicaragua and rebel forces that ended the civil war there in 1988, lamented that the debate on fighting terrorism did not include political causes.

He said West Asian countries and the people there did not hate the U.S. because of its freedom that it enjoyed, but because Americans denied the Palestine people the rights to freedom.

"They hate the United States because American policies are inflicting suffering on the people of Iraq," he added.

He also stressed that international law did not legitimise the removal of Saddam Hussein through attacks.

A change in attitude on the part of the sole superpower in the world and a new set of policies supporting people who had been unjustly accused or deprived are required in order to attain world peace, he said.

Reichler said there was no other way to prevent the repeat of the Sept 11 incident but only through addressing the injustice stemming out of political consideration.

Panel member Tan Sri Dr Noordin Sopiee said it was critically important for the U.S. government not to fall into the terrorist trap or commit massive tactical and strategic errors.

He said it would be the height of folly to "win" Iraq and "lose" Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Jordan, Egypt, Pakistan, Turkey and Iran.

"It's necessary for the U.S. to reform those foreign policies that cause so much anger, bitterness and hatred around the world. At the very top is the issue of Palestine...it's a despairing scenario filled with deep tragedy and profound injustice," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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