

12 MAR 2002

Terrorism

M'SIA HOPES OIC MEET COMES UP WITH STRATEGY TO TACKLE TERRORISM

KUALA LUMPUR, March 12 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is hopeful that the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Foreign Ministers' meeting on terrorism here next month will formulate some form of action by which member countries will be able to address the terrorism menace.

Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak said besides that, the collective voice of the OIC on the subject of terrorism would be reflected in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration to be issued at the end of the special gathering.

"There has been a number of conferences already held on this subject. But this is the first time that we feel we could provide the opportunity where all member countries will be able to participate through the format of the general debate," he said.

Ahmad Fuzi told Bernama this after inspecting facilities at the Palace of the Golden Horses in Seri Kembangan which will host the three-day meeting beginning April 1.

He said that apart from defining terrorism, discussions on the root causes of terrorism would be one of the main features of the meeting.

"We need to look at it in a comprehensive manner. So the subject of definition, question of root causes (of terrorism) will be one of the main elements that will be discussed," he said.

He said that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would deliver his keynote address on the first day of the gathering.

Ahmad Fuzi said that to date, 25 of the 56 OIC members had confirmed their participation at the level of ministers or deputy ministers.

Nevertheless, he said that Malaysia was hopeful that the special gathering would be attended by all member countries.

He said that arrangements were being made to ensure that many of the smaller OIC member states were present at the meeting.

Representatives from the United Nations and the Arab League would also be invited, he said.

The meeting is being convened seven months after the Sept 11 suicide attacks on the United States which destroyed the World Trade Centre in New York and partially damaged the Pentagon in Washington, causing thousands of people to lose their lives.

The US subsequently attacked Afghanistan in its effort to hunt down terrorists linked to the al-Qaeda group led by Saudi-born Osama bin Laden said to be responsible for the attacks on American soil.

In the aftermath of Sept 11, the image of Islam and the Muslim community suffered with reports of Muslims being assaulted and their places of worship or Islamic centres vandalised in many parts of the world.

Speaking in a television interview in London last month, Dr Mahathir said that Kuala Lumpur hoped that at the meeting, Islamic nations would reach agreement to come together and defend Islam as well as correct the misconception that Islam was synonymous with terrorism.

Ahmad Fuzi said: "It is important that we have a collective voice to the effect that terrorism should not be equated with Islam.

"This is a very important aspect that we need to present to the outside world because the image of Muslim countries in general has suffered as a result of statements made equating Islam with terrorism... It is time that this misperception is corrected."

Queried on the possibility that certain countries would force their

views on others, Ahmad Fuzi said that all countries should be able to adopt the spirit of cooperation.

"I think this is where all countries will have to cooperate. If it would lead to a greater degree of cooperation among the OIC member countries, I think it would have achieved its objective," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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