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Syed Hamid-Canada

MALAYSIA TO BEEF UP PRESSURE ON CANADA OVER VISA RULING

SEPANG, Sept 26 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will keep up the pressure on Canada to have it lift the visa requirement for Malaysians visiting that country, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today.

He said the Malaysian Government would work through diplomatic channels to get the visa condition lifted.

"We are not very happy with it no matter whatever reason they give. But if they decide they are not going to review it, there is nothing much we can do about it," he told reporters on arrival at the KL International Airport here after attending the Asia-Europe Summit (ASEM) in Copenhagen.

Malaysians travelling to Canada are required to apply for temporary resident visa effective last Tuesday afternoon.

He said countries of the Commonwealth in which both Malaysia and Canada were members generally did not impose visa on each other unless there were strong reasons.

He said although it was Canada's prerogative to introduce the visa ruling, Ottawa should take into account the fact that Malaysia was one of its closest trading and economic partners among Asean countries.

Responding to claims that Malaysian passports were often misused, Syed Hamid said passports issued by many other countries were also subject to abuse.

Asked whether Malaysia would introduce a similar ruling on Canadians visiting this country, the minister said he did not believe in the tit-for-tat approach.

He also fielded questions on the continued siege by the Israeli military on Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's headquarters in the West Bank City of Ramallah.

Syed Hamid said Israel must stop it because it was inhuman and something that would not contribute towards ending the West Asian crisis.

Israel, he said, had turned a blind eye to the various resolutions passed by the United Nations Security Council over its occupation of Palestinian lands and yet the international community seemed to be doing nothing to compel Tel Aviv to abide by those resolutions.

Asked about the deadly attacks at a Hindu temple which reportedly killed 28 people in the Indian state of Gujarat, Syed Hamid said Malaysia always believed that violence was something that must not be condoned.

He said those involved must sit down and find a peaceful solution to the problem by factoring in the multifaceted population of India.

"We would like to see India peaceful," he added.

Touching on the outcome of the just-concluded Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) in Copenhagen, Syed Hamid said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was initially sceptical about it but eventually found the meeting to be useful, including in terms of bringing Asia and Europe closer together.

-- BERNAMA

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