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Strong declaration to curb terrorism

R. Sittamparam

PUTRAJAYA, Wed. - The coming Special Session of the Organisation of Islamic Conference Foreign Ministers will come up with a strong declaration and follow-up action for a positive and long-term solution in curbing terrorism in the world.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said it was also hoped the voice of 48 out of 57 OIC member countries including 27 Ministers in the session, could allay the misconception among many, in associating Islam with terrorism.

Speaking at his office here today, Syed Hamid said: "This is important as many Islamic countries have suffered immensely due to this misconception.

"Taking terrorism to be a new phenomenon, the world is persecuting Islamic countries for the recent incidents of terrorism and this wrong should be corrected."

Syed Hamid earlier met a delegation of five Kazakhstan parliamentarians headed by its chairman, Zharmakhan Tuyakbay, on a courtesy call at his office.

He said he hoped that the OIC members would participate actively in the session to contribute their input towards providing a strong voice to counter the misconceptions.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's opening address at the session would be the basis of discussions by the participants.

He said Malaysia, which is sponsoring the session, had invited Afghanistan as a guest although it was suspended from the grouping at the 24th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Jakarta in December 1996.

The Foreign Minister of the Afghan interim Government, Dr Abdullah Abdullah, who will lead a three-member delegation to the session, is expected to provide input on terrorism in relation to the Sept 11 attacks in the US and its aftermath.

The delegation will include Afghan Foreign Ministry spokesman Muhammad Omer Samad and Shahabuddin Saqib who is in charge of the United Nations and International Conferences Department of the Ministry.

Meanwhile, asked if the resolution of the Israel-Palestine dispute in the Middle East would help curb terrorism in the world, Syed Hamid said: "This will not necessarily end terrorism, but it will be a major step in removing one of the major causes of terrorism."

"Malaysia's stand, however, is that the root of the problems in the Middle East is Israel's arrogance in not complying with the United Nation's directives for peace in the region. It is Israel that is now in the position to ensure peace in the region."

Syed Hamid said Israel's attempts to block Palestinian President Yasser Arafat from attending the Arab summit to discuss the peace proposal of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah Abdul Aziz was wrong.

He said Arafat's presence at the summit was vital for the peace process in West Asia to succeed.

He was commenting on reports that Arafat had decided to skip the summit following Israel's preconditions to lift a travel ban on him.

sittam@nstp.com.my

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