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TERRORISM ISSUE MAY DOMINATE APPF MEETING

By: Abdul Aziz Harun

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 12 (Bernama) -- Terrorism and security, drug trafficking, piracy on the high seas and corruption are expected to dominate the 11th Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF) beginning here tomorrow.

Dewan Negara President Tan Sri Michael Chen, who is APPF chairman, said that after the incidents on Sept 11, 2001 in the United States, most international bodies were very concerned about world security as the hijacked plane attacks clearly demonstrated that no country was safe from terrorists.

"Anti-terrorism was among the main items on the agenda at the last APPF meeting in Honolulu last year," he told Bernama in an interview at his office here.

The APPF is a non-exclusive forum of national parliamentarians founded by former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone in 1991. The parliamentarians participate either as delegates of their parliaments or in their personal capacity.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to open the three-day meeting to be attended by about 150 delegates from 27 member nations.

The countries are Australia, Cambodia, Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Chile, China, Colombia, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Phillipines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam.

Chen said at the Honolulu meeting delegates focused on the American attacks in Afghanistan with the participants presenting various views.

"This time I think the situation is almost the same with the Americans preparing for war against Iraq. No doubt there will be a number of countries interested in presenting their views on the issue," he said.

He said the meeting would be a good forum for the parliamentarian to urge the relevant countries to listen, to reason and try to solve whatever problems through diplomatic channels.

At the last APPF, the delegates expressed concern over future acts of terrorism and the potential use of weapons of mass destruction.

"I think we need to find some consensus on combatting terrorism and to make whatever steps taken, more efficient," he said.

Chen said Malaysia, with a success story of combatting communist terrorism would present its views over the issue especially the need to find the root cause of terrorism as the best way to deal with the problem.

He said although terrorism appeared as a new agenda being brought to the APPF attention, security issues had always been discussed at previous meetings.

"Previous meetings had also stressed the need to broaden co-operation among member countries in tackling the sea piracy problem in the Asia-Pacific region," he said.

He said sea piracy was quite alarming in the Asia-Pacific region and hence delegates would be very eager to deal with it.

Trafficking in illicit drugs was also one of the main items on the agenda at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Los Cabos, Mexico, last year.

While the Apec, formed in 1989, stresses more on economic cooperation,

the APPF acts as its legislative branch and more of a loosely-structured and non-exclusive forum of national parliamentarians.

Chen said the situation in West Asia was also brought up at the last meeting with a view to creating peace and stability in that part of the world.

"The delegates, I am sure, will like to hear what the Prime Minister has to say at the forum, and they will want to discuss the speech in their sessions," he added.

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