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MAHATHIR TO ADDRESS PROMINENT CONFERENCES IN UNITED STATES

By: Salmy Hashim

WASHINGTON, May 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will address two prominent business conferences, meet top international business leaders and promote trade and investment opportunities in Malaysia in San Francisco and Washington, DC, from May 17-21.

In San Francisco, he will lead a Malaysia-US business and technology dialogue that will focus on high technology industries, the capital market, infrastructure development and encourage strategic US investments in Malaysia.

The forum: "Prospering Together Towards the Asia Pacific Century," is jointly organised by the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI), the Pacific Basin Economic Council (Malaysia), and the California Southeast Asia Business Council.

Leading Malaysian businessmen who will also speak at the one-day conference on Monday include Arab-Malaysian Group chairman Tan Sri Azman Hashim; Sapura Holdings executive chairman Tan Sri Shamsuddin Abdul Kadir, and Renong Berhad executive chairman Tan Sri Halim Saad.

Minister of International Trade and Investment Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz will also update American businessmen on hi-tech investment opportunities in Malaysia at the conference.

Other visible names at the conference include Pulau Pinang chief minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon; Malaysia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Tan Sri Razali Ismail; former US Secretary of State George Shultz; and former US deputy Secretary of State Clifton Wharton.

In Washington, Dr Mahathir will deliver a speech on "The Asian Values Debate" at the 29th International General Meeting of the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC), which will be officially opened by US President Bill Clinton on Monday.

PBEC Director of Media Relations Greg Stanko said here Tuesday members at this year's meeting themed: "Beyond Rhetoric: Implementing Free Trade and Investment in the Pacific Region," would discuss a series of voluntary guidelines they could take home to their governments to promote trade and investment in the region.

PBEC chairman Russell Fynmore said PBEC had rolled up its collective sleeves with the creation of new Special Committees to focus on issues of importance to businesses today, including generating foreign investment flows; reducing administrative barriers to international trade; accelerating implementation of new technologies; and balancing economic development with the need for a clean environment.

The five PBEC committees are on Administrative Barriers, Environment, Food Products, Foreign Direct Investment, and Technology. They will try to influence the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum's focus on the issues important to business in the region as APEC moved to reach its objective of free trade by the year 2020.

Fynmore said: "What is needed is the implementation of policies which will ensure the goal of 2020 becomes a reality, not simply a light on the horizon. Visions must be converted to realities."

Stanko said Dr Mahathir will be "doing coffee" before and after his speech with a small group of prominent business leaders. "There'll be a lot of schmoozing or networking among businessmen and government leaders at the conference," he added.

PBEC, founded in 1967 at the Stanford Research Institute in San Francisco, has grown from a membership of 19 companies from five countries to 1,200 companies from 19 economies.

The PBEC International headquarters is located in Honolulu, Hawaii, and its members are made up of medium and large businesses from Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Fiji, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, the Philippines, Russia, Chinese Taipei (Taiwan), Thailand and the United States. Ecuador will be admitted at the next annual meeting in Manila.

Other speakers at the PBEC conference include Philippines president Fidel Ramos; China's vice-premier Li Lanqing and President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon of Mexico. Rafidah will be one of the discussants in a plenary session on "Japan in the 21st Century." -- BERNAMA

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