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Meetings

APEC-RELATED MEETINGS LINED UP FOR 1998

By: Salmy Hashim

VANCOUVER, Nov 23 (Bernama) -- A number of Apec-related meetings were announced Saturday by Apec ministers in their joint statement as they closed their ninth ministerial meeting here.

Several leaders have arrived here including US President Bill Clinton and Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei to attend the fifth Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum on Monday and Tuesday.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will arrive here Sunday.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to meet Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien and Thai Premier Chuan Leekpai.

Dr Mahathir will be one of the six Asean leaders who will have a breakfast meeting with Clinton on Tuesday.

Malaysia will host the 10th Apec ministerial meeting in Kuala Lumpur followed by the sixth leaders' summit in November next year.

Officials said the Kuala Lumpur meetings would likely focus on human resource development, economic and technical cooperation centred on technology transfer and continuation of liberalisation efforts on trade and investment.

Of importance is the call by several Asian economies that an Apec finance ministers meeting be held before the International Monetary Fund/World Bank Spring meetings in April in view of the currency turmoil in the region.

The meeting was originally scheduled in May in Canada.

The Philippines has agreed to host a ministerial meeting on women in Manila, focusing on women and economic development sometime next year.

Mexico has offered to host the third Science and Technology Ministerial in October 1998.

Trade ministers will meet in Kuching in June next year to look at the proposals for the nine sectors identified for early and voluntary liberalisation. Consumers could see a drop in tariffs as early as in January 1999.

The ministers, in a joint statement issued here Saturday, called on leaders to endorse the effort to open up trade in products and services that include environmental goods and services, fish and fish products, forest products, medical equipment, energy, toys, gems and jewellery, telecommunications and chemicals.

The annual growth of the Environmental goods and services sector, sponsored by Canada, Japan, Taiwan and the United States for early liberalisation, in some Apec economies is 15 to 20 per cent per year while global growth is 5 per cent.

Environmental products and services are worth US\$32.5 billion per year in imports, representing 58.4 per cent of global market.

Meanwhile, the value of the global market for telecommunications equipment was about US\$150 billion last year, growing by approximately 7 per cent a year.

The energy sector, sponsored by Australia, Thailand and the United States, is worth about US\$236 billion in imports per year and Apec accounts for 54 per cent of global trade.

Meanwhile, Japan has offered to host the next energy ministerial meeting in Okinawa in October, while the United States has proposed to host the next Human Resource Development ministerial meeting by the year 2000.

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