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Asia Pacific lawyers to meet in KL conference

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The Federal capital will be the focal point for more than 500 senior business and commercial lawyers from 60 countries in the Asia Pacific region.

These high profile senior members of the legal fraternity from diverse legal jurisdictions will deliberate in specialist committee sessions from April 28 to May 2 at Hotel Istana on several topical issues.

The tremendous response to the conference, organised by the Inter Pacific Bar Association, can be attributed to the pragmatic economic policies of the Malaysian Government as well as the international standing of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The conference will be opened by the Chief Justice of Malaysia Tan Sri Eusoff Chin, who will also deliver the keynote address.

It is predicted that within 25 years, four of the five most important economies will be in Asia - China, Japan, India and Indonesia.

This phenomenal growth will require a strong supporting legal framework and the readiness to face challenges and keep pace with legislative changes and innovations.

The IPBA comes in to meet this challenge. It is an international association of business and commercial lawyers who have an interest in the Asia Pacific region.

The growth of the IPBA has been spurred by the tremendous development of the Asian economies.

The Asian Development Bank in a recent report stated that economic growth in the Asia Pacific region slowed down to 7.4 per cent in 1996 from 8.2 per cent the previous year.

The ADB went on to state that growth was expected to stabilise to around 7.4 per cent this year and next. Despite the slowdown last year, the region recorded another year of healthy economic performance and continued to outperform other developing regions.

The conference's host committee is flying in international economic expert, Dr Gary Hufbauer. He is the Reginald Jones senior fellow from the US Institute of International Economics.

He was the deputy assistant secretary in the US Department of Treasury from 1977 to 1980 and was responsible for trade policy during the Tokyo Rounds. He has authored and co-authored a number of publications.

Hufbauer will present the American position to the 500-odd lawyers in respect of the World Trade Organisation. The largest delegation of lawyers for the conference will come from the US.

The views of the Japanese in terms of the WTO will be outlined by Tadakatsu Sano, its director-general for International Trade policy. Malaysia will be given an opportunity to present its views through Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

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