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Anwar: It's proof of confidence in the region

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - While waiting for the fourth Pacific Dialogue which begins here tomorrow, leading foreign participants who arrived today took the opportunity to engage in talks with Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, met United States Secretary of Defence William Cohen, Thai Deputy Foreign Minister Dr M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra and former American State Secretary Henry Kissinger at the Palace of the Golden Horses.

Speaking to newsmen after the talks, Anwar said the presence of high ranking delegation members to the dialogue, particularly from the US, suggested the country's confidence in the region.

Expressing satisfaction with the good attendance to the dialogue, he said this was significant especially in view of the current economic problem.

The two-day dialogue, to be chaired by Anwar and organised by the Malaysian Institute of Strategic and International Studies, is an annual gathering of prominent regional economic and security experts.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will deliver a keynote address at the opening session. A total of 75 participants, representing countries in the Pacific rim, are attending the dialogue.

He said: "Among those who have turned up are Defence Secretary Cohen, Kissinger and American International Group chairman Maurice Greenberg."

Cohen is accompanied by senior US Defence Department, Department of State and National Security Council officials including Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (State) Stanley Roth and Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (Defence) Kenneth Bacon.

Cohen will speak on regional security and defence cooperation on the first day of the dialogue while Anwar and Senator William V. Roth will talk on economic and financial cooperation.

The first session, to be co-chaired by Anwar and Cohen, will see six speakers deliberating on the theme "Celebration of Civilisations: Practical Steps in Diverse Asia Pacific".

Anwar said he was satisfied with his meeting with Greenberg who had expressed his confidence in the Malaysian economy and his desire to continue investing in the country.

The Deputy Prime Minister added that he explained to Greenberg the Government policies on the arrangement agreed with the World Trade Organisation concerning foreign-owned insurance companies in the country.

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