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APEC-NEWS-PROGRAMME

APEC SUMMIT ENDORSES KL ACTION PROGRAMME ON SKILLS DEVT

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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 18 (Bernama) -- Leaders of Apec economies have endorsed the Kuala Lumpur Action Programme on Skills Development to contribute towards sustainable growth and equitable development to improve the social well-being of their people through skills upgrading.

It was drawn up to maximise the potential for economic growth and improving the well-being of the people in the region.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in announcing the endorsement while reading the Apec leaders' summit declaration today, said the action programme was a significant inroad into public-business collaborative partnership in skills development.

"This programme recognises the value of the contribution of the business sector and underscores Apec's continued broadening of its outreach to the business community," he said.

The action programme, which was attached to the declaration, is focusing efforts in four specific areas namely, upgrading the industrial skills base; spawning new entrepreneurs; technology skills for the new millennium; and strengthening institutional infrastructure to facilitate trade and investment liberalisation.

It suggested three main ways to implement them, including voluntary sponsorship or joint sponsorship from Apec economies to intensify implementation of the projects on a on-going basis and the adoption of the Partners for Progress (PFP) approach.

Economies could seek the participation of the business sector where possible to undertake such projects.

"As principal beneficiaries of Trade and Investment Liberalisation and Facilitation activities, the private sector should be encouraged to contribute to Apec's longer term capacity building measures such as skills development," it said.

Public-business "smart partnership" in skills development was also suggested as an effective approach to counter a market-driven approach to skills training emphasising greater business participation to ensure that training output matches market demand.

The action programme also proposed that an Apec network of skills development centres to enable co-operation resulting in benefits in areas such as programme development, exchange of training modules or instructors and the sourcing of instructors or equipment.

"This will also complement other Apec initiatives on human resources development such as mutual recognition of skills training qualification," it said.

Meanwhile, the declaration also directed Apec ministers to enhance business involvement in relevant Apec activities in view of the important feature of the private sector in Apec work.

It also endorsed the broader participation of the private sector in Apec activities.

"We welcome efforts to improve business mobility through the Apec Business Travel Card scheme and the collective commitment to expand the availability of multiple entry visas or permit to business travellers.

"We also welcome the recommendations by ABAC (Apec Business Advisory Council) and instruct our ministers to study ABAC's proposals, including the Apec Food System," it said.

-- BERNAMA

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