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APEC-PEG

APEC: CAPACITY BUILDING CENTRAL TO SURVIVAL OF APEC

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BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Nov 14 (Bernama) -- APEC leaders were told today that capacity building initiatives are central to the survival of the forum as they build up economies, otherwise it runs the risk of becoming irrelevant.

One of these initiatives is the Malaysian-proposed Partnership for Equitable Growth (PEG), which has been advocating capacity building through the concept of Economic and Technical Cooperation (ECOTECH).

It is aimed at bringing about sharing of resources among APEC economies, in order to promote a more level playing field within APEC, said PEG chief executive officer, Dr Shafiq Sit Abdullah.

"Capacity building is central to the survival of APEC, as the leaders, ministers and delegates at Brunei find APEC running the risk of being irrelevant," he said in a statement issued at the eve of the Economic Leaders Meeting here.

He said the capacity building objectives are clearly outlined in the Smart Partnership concept first espoused by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed, who is also the founding patron of PEG.

Dr Mahathir was previously quoted as saying that "Nations, companies and individuals should strive for a win-win situation, for partnerships benefitting both instead of one at the expense of the others. By adopting the philosophy, individuals, companies and nations would be more prosperous."

Since its April 1999 incorporation, PEG has achieved significant progress in its initial three flagship projects comprising, an APEC-wide Information Technology Education Initiative, Apprenticeship Work Programme for Small and Medium Scale Enterprises and Clean Energy Initiatives.

On the first initiative, with the support of Oracle, Ingenuity Microsystems, United Parcel Service and Hewlett-Packard, the PEG has helped implement RM26 million worth of software and hardware projects in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.

He said that work too has commenced on linking up schools in Thailand and Indonesia with Chile with plans to extend to two other APEC economies.

As for the second initiative, the PEG, working with General Motors, launched the technical exchange program in Seoul whereby industry experts from the American motor company will work with SMEs to improve operating efficiencies, product and manufacturing design and quality control and measurements.

The next phase will include Thailand, Malaysia and China.

The PEG is also working with Malaysia's Small and Medium Scale Development Corporation (SMIDEC) alongside 200 registered SMEs to co-host and participate in a major regional SME Global Suppliers Program and the objectives of this program has been communicated to 1000 SMEs/companies in the region.

As for the third initiative, he said said underpinning the clean energy agenda is the Asian Gas Grid (AGG) project which was initiated in 1998 and APEC members supported the concept of a major pipeline linking gas resource rich economies in Southeast Asia to the major demand centres in northeast Asia.

The AGG is essentially a network of gas pipelines linking existing and proposed gas networks (as proposed under the Trans Asean Gas Grid) in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand with major demand centres in China and

northeast Asia.

The AGG project is based on commercialising the discovered yet undeveloped gas resources in the Natuna Alpha D field with delivery of processed gas through a large gas pipeline with six interconnecting sections.

"Since the proposal was accepted by APEC, the PEG has made significant progress on the APEC/Asian Gas Grid as an initiative which will help build capacity in the form of an infrastructure support system which will deliver clean energy and reduce the cost of entry for the lesser developed APEC economies into the global village", Shafiq said. -- BERNAMA

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