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APEC-IT INITIATIVE

APEC'S PEG IT INITIATIVE TO KICK OFF THIS FRIDAY

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 22 (Bernama) -- To keep e-commerce high on Apec's agenda, the Apec's Partnership for Equitable Growth (PEG) will launch the first phase of the Information Technology (IT) initiative this Friday in Bangkok.

In announcing this, PEG chief executive officer Dr Shafiq Sit Abdullah said the event would receive the support of the Apec Business Advisory Council and Thailand's national chamber of commerce.

The IT initiative would, among other things, encompass the implementation of relevant multimedia and e-commerce applications, on an immediate basis, in selected agencies and schools, he said.

According to Dr Shafiq, the IT initiative was derived from a comprehensive action plan drawn up by PEG to ensure that the 21 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) member countries were in a position to reap the benefits of e-commerce.

"PEG has been drawing up a comprehensive action plan to ensure that Apec adopts a better managed liberalisation blueprint which takes into account the speed in which e-commerce would be adopted by developing countries," he said.

The KL-based PEG was formed after the mandate was given by the Apec leaders in Kuala Lumpur and comprised some of the top business personalities in the region, including Tan Sri Francis Yeoh (Malaysia), Dr Victor Fung (Hong Kong), Timothy Ong (Brunei), Dr Jeffrey Khoo (Chinese Taipei) and Aburizal Bakrie (Indonesia).

The founding patron was Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Dr Shafiq, in a statement here today, said the second phase of the IT initiative could then kick in with PEG's collaboration with other regional initiatives such as e-Asean.

"All task forces will work towards a comprehensive action plan which will be presented to the Apec Economic Leaders at the Apec 2000 Summit in Bandar Seri Begawan this November," he said.

Dr Shafiq also stressed on the importance of Apec member economies working swiftly towards avoiding any possibility of a second economic contagion, precipitated by the lack of technology preparedness and safeguards in the lesser developed member economies.

He said although it was clear what the benefits of e-commerce were in the new strategic and economic landscape of the future, it was less clear what the pitfalls were for a liberalised global economy dependent on the rather unique and exceptional vagaries and security levels in information systems.

"If the scale of the last contagion premised on a less-than-15 percent interconnected and wired-up global economy was anything to go by, then Apec member economies must take heed of the implications of a greater wired global set up," he said. -- BERNAMA

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