

08 MAY 2001

Labour-Meeting

ASEAN LABOUR SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING BEGINS

KUALA LUMPUR, May 8 (Bernama) -- The eighth meeting of the Asean Subcommittee on Labour Affairs began here today ahead of the 15th Asean Labour Ministers Meeting (ALMM) on Thursday.

The subcommittee meeting is attended by the 10-member Asean states to set an agenda for the ministerial forum to be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"Today's meeting will set an agenda for tomorrow (the Senior Labour Officials meeting) and Thursday (ALMM) and also the Asean plus three ministerial meeting (Asean plus China, South Korea and Japan) on Friday," said Human Resources Ministry Secretary General Datuk Syed Muhamad Syed Abdul Kadir.

He said the subcommittee meeting would evaluate progress made on projects since the last Asean Labour Ministers met in Manila a year ago.

"We are looking at a progress report on the projects we have undertaken over the last year and are also discussing suggestions made by the Asean secretariat for development of human resources in the region," he told reporters at the sidelines of today's meeting.

He said the subcommittee meeting would also discuss the stand of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on forced labour in Myanmar so that Asean could make a common stand on the matter.

The ILO will meet in Geneva next month to further discuss the issue and this is one of the reasons the Asean pact is pushing for a collective stand on the problem involving Myanmar.

Asean includes Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Laos and Brunei.

Asked if there would be any specific economic issues to be brought up at the meeting, Syed Muhamad said although there were none, all issues pertaining to labour arising from the global economic woes would be discussed.

The objectives of the ALMM this time around are to address issues of common interest in the labour field that affects the Asean region and to initiate projects that could result in enhancing human resources capabilities and create employment opportunities.

All the Asean 10-member states will be represented by their respective Labour or Human Resources Ministers while the three invited nations will be represented by their Vice Labour Ministers.

This is the third occasion Malaysia is playing host to the ALMM. It hosted the third ALMM in 1980 and eighth ALMM in 1990.

This 15th ALMM will be attended by some 50 delegates from member states and the three invited countries.

On the Asean plus three meeting, Syed Muhamad said the three countries were interested to have a common approach in the development of human resources and find solutions to these problems through technical assistance and sharing of expertise.

"It is most likely that the meeting (Asean plus three) will formulate a framework for future cooperation between Asean and them," he said, adding that although South Korea had not confirmed participation they had shown keen interest in taking part in the meeting.

All Asean ministers attending the meeting have also been invited to attend the Labour Day gathering scheduled for Saturday here.

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