

26 FEB 2001  
BFA-MEETING  
BOAO FORUM FOR ASIA KICKS OFF TODAY

By: Yong Soo Heong

BOAO (Hainan), Feb 26 (Bernama) -- The Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), a high-level dialogue group devoted to discussing regional economic co-operation and expressing the voice of Asia clearly in the fields of economic and social development, kicked off here this morning.

It is envisaged that BFA will be the premier forum with Asian perspectives to promote the business and socio-economic goals of Asian countries through greater integration.

The forum aims to foster greater understanding and co-operation among Asian countries as BFA will be the exchange centre for business people, officials and scholars.

BFA will also aim to accelerate the economic, commercial and social goals of Asian countries through co-operation, regional trade and investment, and science and technology.

Today's meeting began with discussions on the finalisation of the draft declaration on BFA by the Experts' Group and an exchange of views on guidelines for intellectual support.

At midday today, Tan Sri Ajit Singh, the pro-tem secretary-general of BFA, will host a luncheon for all participants at BFA.

At the same function, there will a talk by Long Yongtu, China's vice minister of foreign trade and economic co-operation and chief representative for trade negotiations. The topic of his speech will be "The status quo and the prospects of China's entry into the World Trade Organisation."

Later this afternoon, the preparatory committee of BFA will adopt the BFA agenda and declaration on BFA.

The preparatory committee comprises Chen Jinhua, vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and President of the Chinese Federation of Enterprises, former Philippine president Fidel V. Ramos, former Japanese president Yasuhiro Nakasone and former Australian premier Bob Hawke.

Ajit Singh will be formally appointed BFA secretary-general this afternoon before the members of the preparatory committee exchange views on the guidelines for the charter of BFA and guidelines on intellectual support for FA.

They will also pick a date for the first annual forum of BFA next year.

Later in the evening, Chinese president Jiang Zemin will meet the former Asian leaders in the preparatory committee and other officials attending BFA before posing for a group photograph.

Jiang will later hold bilateral talks with prime minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Dr Mahathir and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali are expected to arrive here today at 5.30 p.m.

Tonight the Hainan provincial government will host a dinner for all BFA delegates and guests which will end with a cultural performance and a fireworks display. -- BERNAMA

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