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APEC-LEADERS

NINTH APEC ECONOMIC LEADERS MEETING BEGINS

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SHANGHAI, Oct 20 (Bernama) -- The two-day Ninth Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders Meeting begins here today at the Shanghai International Conference Centre (ICC) with Taiwan without a representative.

Except for Taiwan, the leaders of the 21-member economies including Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad are expected to discuss topics of trade, economics and war against terrorism.

Chinese president Jiang Zemin chaired the meeting.

The meeting follows a Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) and the two-day Ministerial Meeting which ended on Thursday.

The heads of economies who arrived at the ICC were greeted by Jiang.

They posed for a group photograph before attending the Leaders Agenda Briefing and later held a dialogue with the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), the private sector version of APEC.

Taiwan failed to send a representative to this year's meeting, claiming that China did not send a formal invitation.

Initially, Taiwan has proposed former vice president Li Yuan-Zu as the representative at the summit here but was not approved by China.

Beijing has forced Taiwan to limit its representation at previous APEC Summits to a cabinet minister or a business leader. In Brunei last year, Taiwan was represented by Taiwan Central Bank governor Perng-Fai Nan.

Taiwan takes part in APEC Meetings as an "economy" under the title "Chinese Taipei" -- an arrangement designed to overcome China's objection to recognition of Taiwan as a separate state.

APEC groups Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zeland, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, the U.S. and Vietnam. -- BERNAMA

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