

# WEF organisers pleased with participation by Muslim nations

By JOHAN FERNANDEZ

NEW YORK: THE World Economic Forum (WEF) gets under way here tomorrow with a turnout of participants from Muslim countries that the organisers have described as "unprecedented."

Organisers said it was good to see such a large group of Muslim leaders from around the world present to discuss issues that affect the changing world.

"We believe the trust we have with the leaders of the Muslim world is shown here by their unprecedented participation," said Frederic Sirce, the managing director and head of the Centre for Re-

gional Strategies.

"I think it is also a reflection of their desire to engage in a dialogue to try and dispel some of the perceptions that may be afflicting us when we look at the Muslim world and also try and bridge some of the stronger ties that need to be developed," he told a press conference here on Monday.

He said the forum was re-engaging into its regional activities that had been on hold since 1997 in the Arab world and the Middle East.

On June 17, the forum will be convening an Arab, Middle East and North Africa summit in Cairo in partnership with the Arab League to re-engage the forum into that

part of the world.

The conference will also be holding a workshop on Afghanistan to see how the private sector can come to the fore to rebuild that country where more than 20% of the people are illiterate.

New York is gearing up for the WEF meeting that will involve more than 2,700 participants from 106 countries.

This number will include 30 heads of government, among them Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Security will be tight judging from the presence of New York Police Department and security personnel around the press centre at the Inter-Continental Hotel on Monday.

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