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PBEC-MALAYSIA

ACCOLADES CONTINUE TO POUR IN FOR MALAYSIA'S HOSTING OF PBEC MEETING

KUALA LUMPUR, May 16 (Bernama) -- Malaysia, which organised the 35th International General Meeting (IGM) of the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC) more than a week ago, is still getting accolades for having organised a successful conference.

PBEC is an international association of senior business leaders representing more than 1,100 major corporations in 20 economies around the Pacific, which account for more than US\$4 trillion in global sales and employ more than 10 million people. It is also a forum through which business leaders could create new business relationships, exchange views with government officials, and produce recommendations on key business issues.

Robert G. Lees, former PBEC president and senior executive advisor (Asia Pacific) for KPMG Consulting, remarked that the recent meeting was not only an extremely successful conference for PBEC, it was also PBEC's best.

The conference was organised by PBEC Malaysia, which is led by its chairman, Tan Sri Azman Hashim, and its director-general, Rohana Mahmood.

"The excellent quality and positive results of the conference, held in such difficult times, has given PBEC a much needed shot in the arm to move forward. It was an actively wonderful experience from the opening right through to the closing," Lees said in a statement here.

He said although PBEC Malaysia had only six months to organise the event, it was an outstanding conference.

Lees said it was also gratifying to see the level of support that the Malaysian government and business community contributed to PBEC's IGM.

"It shows how much Malaysia believes in PBEC and its mission of being the independent voice of business in the Pacific. Overall, the IGM was not only good for PBEC but Malaysia and the regional economy," he added.

The theme of the conference was "Striving for Growth in a Challenging Environment" and Lees described it as important for the region, especially in the wake of the Asian financial crisis and the harrowing events of Sept 11.

Some 450 delegates, 300 local and international media, as well as 15 ministers from around the region attended the conference.

"What the delegates saw for themselves was an extremely well-organised conference by both business leaders and the government of Malaysia. We saw a very self-confident Malaysia with good things happening everywhere and getting better all the time," he said.

Lees also paid a glowing tribute to the open and witty dialogue on terrorism, religion, globalisation and a plethora of other issues which showed international delegates how well-versed and experienced Malaysians were at the art of statesmanship.

"It has shown the world that the spirit of Malaysia Inc. is very much alive and active and has done much to remove doubt and prejudice about Malaysia's stability," he said.

This was the second time since 1994 that PBEC has held its IGM in Kuala Lumpur. While the 1994 meeting was a good one, Lees remarked that many of the delegates who returned for the first time since 1994 were not prepared for the developments that awaited them.

"In a short span of eight years we were amazed at what the government and people of Malaysia had achieved. From our landing at the ultra-modern

KLIA, our train ride on the ERL, right up to the conference venue next to the magnificent Petronas Twin Towers, we were blown away by the developments that had taken place," he said.

Another delegate, Sue Hooper of Canada, said, "This was one of the best IGMs in PBEC's 35th history. The speeches and question and answer sessions by Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad as well as the Minister of International Trade and Industry, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, were entertaining, stimulating and worth the price of admission."

Two other Canadians, Victor and Leona Apps who had travelled and lived in Asia for many years, said, "The Kuala Lumpur's IGM was probably the best we've ever been to."

A Chilean delegate's quote best summed up the feelings of delegates at the end of the conference -- "We came with a sense of crisis but are leaving with a sense of hope." -- BERNAMA

MR SHY