

YEAB to host economic forum

By CT Hj Mahmod

YOUNG, smart and business-savvy, the Young Entrepreneurs Association of Brunei (YEAB) are out to make an impact in September with the "3rd Asia Europe Emerging Economic Leaders Forum", to be held at The Empire Hotel & Country Club.

Dubbed the key event in the business calendar, the forum will bring together more than 100 young entrepreneurs from Asia and Europe to discuss current global challenges affecting entrepreneurs, with special focus on 'Internationalisation of SMEs'.

Co-organising the event with Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), YEAB is ready to make the forum a dynamic platform for young economic leaders to exchange of views and learn more about different business cultures in Asia and Europe.

Also on the table, will be discussions on the mechanisms to promote bi-regional cooperation in fostering closer collaboration between Chambers of Commerce and SMEs in Asia and Europe.

YEAB, a non-profit organisation incepted during APEC 2000 SME Business Forum, is living up to its mission in ensuring access to a network of entrepreneurial experience and facilities to nurture an enterprising culture in the country.

In the five years of its establishment, YEAB has actively raised awareness of the organisation through active participation in national and international seminars, workshops and conferences including its first international conference that attracted entrepreneurs from Canada, Asia and Australia.

With their theme, "Driving the Future of the Nation", YEAB's goal is to open up a new world of opportunities, relationships and resources for young entrepreneurs in Brunei. The upcoming forum is inline with YEAB's many roles, which include providing an environment to nurture entrepreneurial leadership and creativity with access to knowledge, experience, inspiration and networking.

Meanwhile, their partner in organising the economic leaders forum, ASEF, aims to promote better mutual understanding among civil societies of Asia and Europe through greater intellectual, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges as a corollary track to the ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) process.

The institution provides opportunities for increased direct interaction among peoples of Asia and Europe on the basis of mutual respect.

Also playing a supporting role in the success of the forum are Brunei's corporate giants BLNG, HSBC, QAF Group, DST, Adinin Group, and Galfar.

Various topics pertaining to the development of global SMEs will be discussed throughout the four-day forum from September 20 till 23, with influential corporate and government figures invited to deliver papers.

The first plenary session will highlight the important role of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and the significance of their

To make an impact at 3rd Asia Europe Emerging Economic Leaders Forum

internationalisation process. Mr. Sanjay Natarajan of SVP and COO, Corporate and Investment Banking, DBS Bank, Singapore, will deliver his paper on the role of SMEs in Economic and Social Development.

The paper on 'Challenges and Opportunities in Internationalisation of SMEs' will be delivered by Robert Robles of Advanced Music, Barcelona Spain.

Presentations and discussions on access to finance of SMEs in Asia and Europe will be discussed during the second plenary session, where Mr Francis Carpenter, Chief Executive of European Investment Fund will speak on access to finance for SMEs in Europe, while speaking from the Asian perspective will be Mr Dionisio C Ong, CEO Asiatrust Bank, Philippines

Hj Roselan bin Hj Md Daud, Managing Director of Islamic Bank of Brunei meanwhile will talk on Islamic Banking and SMEs.

The third plenary session on September 22 will evolve around strategies of promoting cooperation between SMEs in Asia and Europe. Mr. Giorgio Magistrelli, Executive General Manager of European Chamber of Commerce in China will speak on its role in the opportunities of SMEs in China.

A paper entitled 'Challenges and Obstacles for Franchise Initiatives Between Asian and European Companies' will be delivered by Mr Albert Kong, Chairman/CEO of Certified Franchise Executive of Asiawide Group of Companies.

Case studies on sharing of best practices will be the central topic of discussion during the third plenary session involving a case study on Hungary by Dr Antal Szabo, Regional Adviser of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Another case study will be on the Irish experience where Denis Marnane, Equity & Venture Capital Department of Enterprise, Ireland, will take on the role of the state to stimulate access to Equity for SMEs.

Two concurrent workshops will be held on the last day, with the first workshop on Financing for SMEs where participants will discuss the challenges, opportunities and obstacles in financing SMEs in Asia and Europe.

The second workshop will be on the Internationalisation of SMEs where discussion will take place on the challenges, opportunities and obstacles for increased business cooperation between Asian and European SMEs.

Interested young entrepreneurs who wish become members of YEAB can contact YEAB at 2453888.