

13/03/1997

## Firms urged to attend Fukuoka Dialogue

SMALL- and medium-sized companies that are interested in pursuing Information Technology (IT) and multimedia business can benefit from participating in the Fukuoka Dialogue.

Encik Mirzan Mahathir, president of the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI), said, "I urge small- and medium-sized companies in the IT and multimedia business to seriously consider attending this forum as there will be plenty of opportunities to hold discussions with the many participants there."

The Fukuoka Dialogue is part of an international forum that will be held at the Fukuoka Symphony Hall on March 28 in Kyushu, Japan.

Mirzan added that the dialogue will provide an excellent opportunity for small- and medium-sized Malaysian companies to engage in fruitful discussions with Japanese IT firms, especially as many Japanese companies have expressed interest in the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) and are keen on meeting Malaysian companies.

Mirzan was speaking to reporters at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday to announce the Fukuoka Dialogue, which is being jointly organised by ASLI, the Asia Business Centre and the Nishinippon Newspaper Co Ltd.

"The dialogue is intended to be a high-level meeting among the business communities of the two countries, particularly in the IT industry and will include the governments, policy- and decision-makers, service providers, suppliers and corporate implementers in the Asian region," he said.

"The fact that the organisers expect 1,800 participants shows how much interest has already been generated," he said, adding that about 30 representatives from local companies have already confirmed participation in the dialogue.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will deliver the keynote address at the dialogue, to be entitled "The digital century: Opportunities for mutual collaboration between Japan and Malaysia," during his official visit to Japan.

Among the forum's objectives are promoting closer economic and business ties between Malaysia and Japan and encouraging small- and medium-sized Japanese industries to invest in Malaysia.

The forum is expected to enhance Japanese participation in Malaysia's MSC, promote closer multilateral ties between Asian countries and Japan as well as facilitate strategic alliances and joint ventures between Japanese and Malaysian companies, with a special focus on IT areas.

The forum will be opened by Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and will be broadcast in real time via the Internet.

Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, Chief Minister of Penang Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Minister of Health Datuk Chua Jui Meng and Kedah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid are expected to attend the dialogue.

Tan Sri Datuk Dr Othman Yeop Abdullah, the executive chairman of the Multimedia Development Corp on the Multimedia Super Corridor, senior managers and Malaysian chief executive offices are also likely to be at the forum.

Mr Kenji Takimoto, the president of the Asia Business Centre in Fukuoka, described the island of Kyushu as being Japan's Silicon Valley. Fukuoka is a thriving metropolis with an outward orientation to Asia.

Also present at the press conference were the director/executive vice-president of ASLI, Mr Michael Yeoh, Mr T. Ozawa, the minister and deputy chief of mission from the Embassy of Japan.

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