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Mara to host Asian Association of Open Universities meeting

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SHAH ALAM, Fri. - Mara Institute of Technology has been selected to host the 11th annual conference and exhibition of the Asian Association of Open Universities scheduled for four days starting Nov 11.

This is the first time the annual event is to be held in Malaysia under the theme "Quality Assurance in Distance and Open Learning."

It had previously been held in Iran, Taiwan, India, Hong Kong, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Thailand.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to open the conference on Nov 12 to be held at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

ITM director Datuk Dr Ahmad Zaidee Laidin said the fact that ITM was given the honour of hosting the event signified the growing reputation and recognition of the institute and Malaysia as an education hub of the future.

"Distance and open learning has now become an important part of the Education Ministry's policy in its effort to reach the target of 40 per cent population with higher education by the year 2020.

"Through distance and open learning system, ITM also hopes to be able to increase its student intake to 100,000 by the year 2000," he said at a ceremony today to appoint the New Straits Times as the official newspaper for the event.

He said the event would enable local institutes of higher learning to gain insights into the latest, state-of-the-art educational tools and technology that were currently available.

In conjunction with the conference, a four-day exhibition will be held to provide the industries with the opportunity to showcase their latest products in the field of distance education and instructional materials.

Besides the NST as the official newspaper, several reputable multi-national corporations have also expressed their interest and support in sponsoring the event.

More than 400 delegates from prominent institutions of higher learning and multi-national corporations throughout the world are expected to take part in the conference and exhibition.

The exhibition is expected to generate widespread public interest through first hand demonstration of the latest developments and innovations in teaching and learning methods.

NST assistant group editor Ahmad A. Talib said the company's involvement in the event would further enhance the good working co-operation that currently exists between the media and ITM.

Ahmad said the NST was committed to the pursuit of knowledge and would do everything possible to help make the conference a success.

The NST's cooperation with ITM covers many fields, including taking in ITM Mass Communications students for their practical training.

Also present at the ceremony were chairman of the conference, Prof Dr Zarina Abdullah, who is also ITM deputy rector for distance learning and the president of the Commonwealth of Learning, Canada, Datuk Prof Dr Gajaraj Dhanarajan.

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