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Talks on fighting poverty among women in Asia-Pacific

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Regional Steering Committee on the Advancement of Rural and Island Women for Asia Pacific or RSC-AP will hold its first meeting in Kuala Lumpur next week.

The meeting, to be held at the Nikko Hotel from Oct 13 to 16, will be officiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

At a Press conference held at Sri Perdana today, RSC-AP chairman Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali said that the meeting would bring together 100 participants from the Asia Pacific countries.

They will share views and information on poverty eradication programmes organised by member countries.

"Participants are expected to focus on establishing strategies to overcome poverty.

"It is also expected to increase awareness and commitment of member states to the micro-finance programme designed to provide adequate financing for rural and island women to escape poverty."

Apart from that, the meeting is expected to bring closer RSC-AP members to enhance co-operation and efficiency.

Those who have confirmed their attendance for the meeting include four First Ladies from Pakistan, Iran, India and Malaysia.

They are Begum Kulsoom Nawaz Sharif from Pakistan, Zohreh Khatami Sadeghi from Iran, Usha Narayanan from India and Dr Siti Hasmah herself representing Malaysia.

Dr Siti Hasmah said other than the four First Ladies, the meeting would also be attended by special envoys representing the First Ladies' of the Philippines, Tonga, Kazakhstan and China.

The special guest for the meeting is Vo Thi Le from Vietnam.

Dr Siti Hasmah said a lecture on "Eradication of Poverty Through Micro-credit Focusing on Rural Women and Their Families" will be presented by Professor Mohammad Yunus from Grameen Bank of Bangladesh after the launching ceremony.

The regional committee was established as a result of the Rural Women General Summit held in Geneva in 1992 organised by the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

The Geneva Declaration was signed to outline proposals for the improvement of living standards among rural women.

The Asia-Pacific regional committee was established to ensure the implementation and advocacy of the Geneva Declaration in this region and Malaysia was chosen to chair the committee between 1995 and 1998 at the committee's formation meeting in Beijing in 1995.

The committee's secretariat is based at the Women's Affairs Department of the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development.

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