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Acid '98 to look into Internet as media to facilitate trade

THE Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation Customs Industry Dialogue or Acid '98, which will be held in Kuala Lumpur on Monday, will look into the issue of the Internet media being used to facilitate trade between countries through Customs administration.

Customs and Excise Department deputy director-general Datuk Abdul Rashid Bolong said Malaysia, being the host country, would take the opportunity to address electronic commerce applications in global trade.

It (Internet media) was raised at a similar forum in Montreal, Canada, last year.

Speaking at a Press conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Abdul Rashid said three key areas encompassing "Human resource development in facing future challenges of the new global trading environment, IT: A tool towards liberal trade facilitation, and integrity and co-operation between Customs and the business sectors to support global trade facilitation" will be discussed at Acid '98.

"Faster clearance, easier procedures to facilitate trade are challenges which need to be worked out between countries.

"While Malaysia may have the facilities, we have to ensure that other countries share similar facilities, if not, develop a common base," he said.

The Malaysian Customs, he said, was one of the few in the Asia Pacific region using Electronic Data Interchange.

The system will be extended for use at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport and the Second Link in Johor Baru soon.

Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Dr Affifuddin Omar will present the keynote address at the dialogue.

An annual meeting of Customs and global trade experts held under the auspices of the Apec Sub-committee on Customs Procedures, the theme of this year's dialogue is "Meeting the challenges of the next millennium".

Jointly organised by the Customs and Excise Department of Malaysia and the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia, it precedes the annual Apec leaders' meeting in Kuala Lumpur in November this year.

Twenty-one Apec member and member-designate economies will attend the two-day meeting on pertinent Customs issues that could have profound implications on the region's trade and economic performance.

These will include Peru, Russia and Vietnam which are three new economies which will be admitted to Apec this year.

Abdul Rashid said Acid '98 would be conducted, for the first time, as a dialogue similar to the Smart Partnership Dialogue introduced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Apart from its objectives to achieve greater transparency and better facilitation of trade within the region, it also aims at presenting a common position of the Customs industry to important international organisations that play a significant role in global trade.

United Parcel Service or UPS, which is the main sponsor and official air express carrier for the event, handed a contribution of US\$60,000 (RM237,600) to Abdul Rashid.

Its Asia Pacific regional director (global facilitation and Customs operations) James Goh described the Malaysian Customs as being on the right path towards using paperless documentation in their transactions.

Goh said research had shown the Internet as a powerful media as it would

cost a lot less than using electronic commerce to handle Customs transactions.

However, some quarters had expressed concern over the security aspect.

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