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Conference, exhibition on local IT services and products

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Government, the private sector, communities and schools should come together to develop localised, feasible information technology applications for everyday use.

The development of such home-grown demonstrator applications will be among the main thrusts of the Infotech Malaysia/ITX '98 conference and exhibition next month, Association of the Computer Industry Malaysia (Pikom) chairman Shaifubahrim Saleh said yesterday.

"Developing local IT expertise and applications will help cut down on imports of IT products, solutions and services, which currently make up 70 per cent of our RM6 billion IT industry.

"In fact, as the demand for IT products and services increases, we should aim to cut down our IT imports by 10 per cent a year," he said in an interview at his office.

Shaifubahrim said Malaysians had the capability to develop and market world-class brands in applications and solutions, but needed the confidence to do so.

Malaysia, on the threshold of achieving developed-nation status, was in a key position to supply local expertise and solutions to developing countries in the region, he said.

Shaifubahrim said ITX '98 would showcase home-grown IT applications and solutions of local entrepreneurs, individuals, educational institutions, Government agencies and organisations.

"However, it is important that they be helped to develop their research and innovations into a product which can be accessed by the public," he said.

The main difficulty faced by the growing local IT industry was not lack of funding, he added, but knowledge on how to apply for grants.

Shaifubahrim said entrepreneurs could voice their views on this and other IT-related issues at the Infotech Malaysia conference.

Pikom, he said, hoped to help the Government make IT accessible and affordable for all Malaysians.

Pikom is working with an NGO on a project to collect and redistribute old computers from companies which were replacing them, to needy schools and charitable organisations.

Organised by Pikom and the National IT Council, the annual conference and exhibition will be held from April 21 to 24 at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also NITC chairman, will give the keynote address and launch the event on April 21.

The event is co-organised by Mimos Bhd, the Multimedia Development Corporation, the Malaysian Administrative, Modernisation and Management Planning Unit, Telekom Malaysia Bhd and Uni-Technologies.

New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd and Sin Chew Jit Poh are the official media.

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