

12/09/1998

PM to head panel for `virtual' conference

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will head a panel discussion, which will be held via a video-conferencing session, during the Multimedia Asia '98 exhibition which will be held from Sept 29 to Oct 2.

The six-member panel of local and foreign academicians and economists make up a "Virtual Commonwealth" - a framework for dialogue on issues of governance in the information age.

Local panelists for the world's first "Virtual Commonwealth" conference are Multimedia Development Corporation Sdn Bhd executive chairman Tan Sri Othman Yeop Abdullah and the secretary of the National Information Technology Council Tengku Datuk Dr Azzman Shariffadeen.

Foreign panelists, who are going to give their input from different cities, are the World Bank president James Wolfensohn, the European Union Commissioner for industrial affairs (IT and Telco) Martin Bergemman and Harvard University's dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Government Dr Joseph Nye.

Wolfensohn would be giving his comments and views from New York, Nye would give his from Boston, both in the United States, while Bergemman would give his views from London.

The moderator for the panel discussion is Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia chairman and chief executive officer Tan Sri Dr Noordin Sopiee.

"Virtual Commonwealth" is a framework for dialogue based on the notion of promoting the commonwealth and creating a global framework for shared prosperity, well-being and welfare.

Announcing this yesterday at a Press conference in Kuala Lumpur, Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Leo Moggie said the "Virtual Commonwealth's" theme would be "Governance in an Internetworked World: Towards a Global Civilised Society".

Topics include human rights, roles, responsibilities and relationships in promoting human dignity and socio-economic justice, he said.

The event will be held on the evening of the opening day of MMA '98 at the Palace of the Golden Horses in Sungai Besi, Kuala Lumpur.

"Such an attempt has never been undertaken anywhere in the world before. The `Virtual Commonwealth' at MMA '98, which is conceptualised and will be operationalised wholly by Malaysians, will be a world's first," said Tengku Azzman, who is also Mimos Bhd chief executive officer.

Guests to the event are by invitation only and they would include CEOs of companies participating at MMA '98 as well as related conference and workshops delegates.

MMA '98 is a forum to facilitate companies interested in the Multimedia Super Corridor to discuss, be heard and be informed by officers from the highest level of the Government, NITC and MSC.

This year's exhibition offers a showcase of local and international leading edge IT and multimedia technologies, architecture applications, systems and services.

While the number of exhibitors have yet to be confirmed, MMA '98 is expected to attract about 20,000 visitors.

At the press conference, Moggie also witnessed sponsorship presentation by Southern Bank Bhd and Sun Microsystems Malaysia Sdn Bhd for the four-day exhibition.

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