

23/09/1999

IT knowledge crucial for piece of exciting future

Shareem Amry

INFORMATION technology experts have been sending out the same message over and over again: the IT wave waits for nobody. We have to learn to ride it now if we want a piece of an exciting future.

Malaysians who want to heed the message by either discovering the latest IT products and services, or by finding a place which can introduce them to the digital world, have an excellent opportunity to do so this week at the fourth Multimedia Asia (MMA '99) conference and exhibition.

The exhibition will be held at the Mines International Exhibition Centre in Seri Kembangan from today to Sunday.

About 150 exhibitors have signed up to showcase the latest lines of IT products, services and applications, giving even the IT neophyte a view of what's in store for the future.

Bringing together leading companies dealing with multimedia, computing, communications, telecommunications and application technologies, the event will only be open to the public on Saturday and Sunday.

Tengku Datuk Dr Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen, president and chief executive officer of Mimos Berhad, recently urged all Malaysians, from government officials, to private sector chieftans, to members of the public, to take advantage of the event.

Tengku Azzman explained that the IT revolution signalled a radical change in the economic paradigm, a change that Malaysians would have to get ready for by becoming knowledge workers for a knowledge economy.

"Who you are and what position you are in will no longer be of primary importance. What you know, and how well you apply your knowledge, will be the deciding factor," he said.

The most high-profile physical manifestation of Malaysia's push towards IT is the Multimedia Super Corridor, the progress of which was examined during the MMA '99 conference yesterday.

But while the MSC is seen as an engine of growth for a knowledge economy, Tengku Azzman noted that it was important to keep sending the message out to the masses through conferences and exhibitions such as MMA '99.

Organised by the National Information Technology Council, Mimos and the Multimedia Development Corporation, the event is another piece of a strategy to revolutionise the way we think, live, work, teach and do business.

Products and services to be showcased include the latest software to guard computer systems against the ever-present threat of viruses and to ensure that all transactions over the Internet remain secure.

Comprehensive databases, such as those that compile up-to-date business-related information such as taxes and tariffs, monetary and trade policies, trade statistics, business practices, business risks, legal practices and travel, will also be up for viewing.

Software companies such as Microsoft will also be giving the public a chance to view their new software products before they are released on the worldwide market.

Visitors will get to see, touch and experiment with the latest IT products, to give them a first-hand understanding of what the future will be like, and a perspective of how far the industry has come in such a short time.

MMA '99 will be held concurrently with the Invention, Industrial Design

and Technology Exhibition, or ITEX '99.

The latter exhibition will promote innovations and new technologies to the nation and international marketplace, and give Malaysians a chance to see the link between industrial research and development and technological excellence and competitiveness.

Itex '99 will also showcase the Prime Minister's Pavillion, a collection of Dr Mahathir's 20 personal inventions.

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