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Malaysia to host conference on handicapped

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Malaysia will host Campaign '99 Conference for the Asia and Pacific Decade for the Disabled Persons, 1993-2002 from Nov 27 to Dec 31 at the Palace of Golden Horses Hotel in Seri Kembangan, near here.

The week-long conference will be the biggest awareness campaign and the largest international gathering on the disabled ever held in Malaysia, said the chairman of the working committee Datuk Dr Mohinder Singh.

In 1992, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific (Unescap) declared the period 1993-2002 as the Asian and Pacific Decade for Disabled Persons.

Two key documents were formulated and adopted, the Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of Persons with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region and the Agenda for Action for the Decade.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad signed the proclamation on May 16, 1994, which is in line with the country's aspirations of a Caring Society.

"The awareness campaign and the conference is for Malaysia to show how much it has achieved and to put forward the achievements made," said Mohinder.

On the first two days, there will be a pre-conference workshop to examine the current situation in Malaysia and the progress that has been achieved since Dr Mahathir signed the proclamation, said Mohinder.

He said, the second part will be the regional conference which will examine a wide range of aspects on the needs of the disabled.

Another day will be allocated for field visits where participants can visit welfare homes or organisations, depending on their interest, and the last day will coincide with the Malaysia's Day for the Disabled.

Speakers for the conference are well-known in their areas of expertise and 14 of the 33 speakers are themselves disabled persons, said the chairman of the scientific committee Dr Zaliha Omar.

She added that six of the speakers are Malaysians.

She said a study will be submitted to the National Consultative Commission based on the workshops which is expected to collect issues, statement of problems and proposals from the disabled.

Mohinder said the target for the pre-conference workshop was 500 to 600 participants from people who are disabled, those working with the disabled and the general public who are interested or are currently caring for a disabled person.

About 200 participants from 20 countries are expected to attend the regional conference with the largest delegation from Japan, said Mohinder.

"We are encouraging people to attend, that is why the registration fee for the pre-conference workshop will be only RM50, while the international conference is RM200," said Mohinder.

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