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Putting smart partnerships into practice

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AFTER a one-year lapse since the last dialogue in 1997, the fourth Langkawi International Dialogue takes centre stage again tomorrow.

Participants from 38 countries will deliberate on the philosophy and concept of smart partnerships towards managing the economic crisis.

Nine heads of state and government leaders including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and over 350 participants will meet at the "roundtable" at Berjaya Langkawi Beach and Spa Resort in the legendary island of Langkawi for four days to work out how smart partnerships can be put into practice.

LID '99, to be opened by Dr Mahathir who is LID's patron, will specifically focus on the crisis and the process of economic recovery.

Participants will relate how their respective economies coped with the financial crisis by taking recovery measures without the assistance of the International Monetary Fund.

In contrast, Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Dr Supachai Panitchpakdi will relate the experience of his country which received financial assistance from the IMF.

Thus, the dialogue aptly carries the theme Managing the Economic Recovery - The Smart Partnership Approach.

This year's event will focus on three major topics: learning from the economic crisis; accelerating economic recovery through the smart partnership approach, and sustaining a stable future.

The Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology and London-based Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management are once again jointly organising this year's event.

Participants will find LID '99 different from previous dialogues due to its relevance to the countries plagued by the economic crisis, MIGHT chairman Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman said recently.

Everybody would have an opportunity at the roundtable to scrutinise and give their views on ways to counter the mid-1997 crisis as well as the existing smart partnership ventures, he said.

Sessions will consist of a dialogue forum and an interactive session (groups of about 10 participants in roundtable discussions guided by facilitators).

There will be an added attraction with the inaugural participation of the spouses of participating heads of state.

Through two closed-door sessions, the spouses will delve into women's potential in contributing to economic recovery and the social agenda which includes health issues.

They will also look into women's role as smart partners in the managing economic recovery.

LID '99 also includes for the first time ever, a specific forum for the heads of state and government leaders to "turn the tables" on the media covering the event.

The heads of state and government leaders will pose questions to journalists during the two-session dialogue, some of which are expected to be thought-provoking.

This session will be recorded by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Topics may include the media's role in accelerating and sustaining the Asian recovery.

Conceptualised at the First Langkawi International Dialogue in 1995, LID

is the brainchild of Dr Mahathir who has consistently emphasised smart partnerships as the way to achieve socio-economic and political stability.

The full list of leaders and Ministers attending LID '99 are: President Festus Gontebanye Mogae of Botswana; President John Atta-Mills of Ghana; Jordanian Finance Minister Dr Michel Marto; Kyrgyz Speaker of Parliament Mukambayev Usup; Prime Minister Dr Pakalitha Mosisili of Lesotho; Dr Mapop Chipeta of Malawi; Prime Minister Fenech Adami of Malta; President Caseem Uteem of Mauritius; President Joaquim Alberto Chissano of Mozambique; President Dr Sam Nujoma of Namibia; Vice-President James Alix Michel of Seychelles; New South African Vice-President Jacob Zuma; Sudanese President-General Lt-Gen Omar Hassan Ahmad; King Mswati III of Swaziland; Taiwanese Finance Minister Dr Paul Chiu Cheng-hsiung; President Benjamin William Mkapa of Tanzania; Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Dr Supachai Panitchpakdi; Zambia's Minister of Finance and Economic Development Dr Katele Kalumba, and President Dr Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

International companies being represented at Langkawi comprise British Aerospace Plc, Hyundai Engineering & Construction Co Ltd, Dresdner Kleinwort Benson Ltd, UK, Marconi Communications of Italy, Merrill Lynch, UK, Salomon Smith Barney Inc, US, and Rolls-Royce, UK.

There are also a large representation from the Malaysian corporate sector such as Telekom Malaysia, which is the main sponsor of LID '99, Tenaga Nasional Bhd, Malaysia Airlines, Shell, as well as top officials from the regulatory authorities of the financial sector.

Cabinet Ministers expected to attend LID '99 include Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, First Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin, Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Leo Moggie.

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