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World leaders-media dialogue at Langkawi meet

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FOR a change, journalists covering the fourth Langkawi International Dialogue (LID) starting this weekend will be invited to field questions from world leaders rather than merely posing them.

LID organisers, Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM) and the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (Might), have arranged for selected journalists to meet with the heads of state and government on Sunday, the same day the four-day LID, July 25-28, kicks off.

LID co-convener Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman said the opening and closing news conferences will in fact take the form of a dialogue among the leaders, their spouses, CPTM fellows and selected journalists. Hundreds of local and foreign journalists are expected to converge in Langkawi, and for the first time the media will be asked to respond to questions from the leaders and vice versa, on "Managing Economic Recovery for Shared Prosperity - The Smart Partnership Approach", he said. The exchange of views will allow the leaders, including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, to gain a better insight on current domestic and international issues, Omar said, adding that "the BBC (British Broadcasting Corp) will be there to record the session on Sunday".

In previous LIDs, news conferences had tended to be used by some journalists to ask questions not related to the dialogue.

"This time, we want to make sure the focus is on LID," he said at a press briefing in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Omar, who is also the Science Adviser to the Government, said the special session is an opportunity for the leaders, especially Dr Mahathir himself, to find out how well-informed the journalists are about the smart partnership concept and the initiatives being pursued.

The facilitator for the leaders-media dialogue will be the joint chairman of LID, Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali, who is also Chief Secretary to the Government. He will be assisted by Smart Partnership International Dialogue co-convener, Omar himself and Dr Mihaela Y. Smith, the executive director of CPTM.

On LID, Omar said eight national leaders have confirmed their attendance.

Ministers and corporate leaders will also be among about 300 participants who have started arriving on the island resort for this year's event.

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