

22 NOV 2000

LID-NEWS

ALTERNATIVE NEWS NETWORK IN THE PIPELINE

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

LANGKAWI, Nov 22 (Bernama) -- Bernama may be made the centre of a proposed news exchange network based on the smart partnership concept that was agreed to at the Langkawi International Dialogue 2000 (LID 2000), joint dialogue convener Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman said today.

He said the operational structure of the Internet-based news network needed to be worked out now that its setting up had been agreed to by the heads of government who attended the dialogue.

A working paper on the matter would be submitted to the heads of government for them to give views on the mode of operations of the news network, said Dr Omar, who is Science Adviser to the Prime Minister.

"If it is agreed that Malaysia handles this task, Bernama, in particular, can be the centre for the news network," he told reporters on the last day of the LID 2000 here.

The news exchange network is aimed at providing accurate, balanced and objective news from the perspective of countries supporting the smart partnership concept.

The name for the proposed network has not been decided yet but the "Smart Partnership News Network" is among several suggested.

At the close of the leaders' dialogue sessions yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there was a need for an alternative source of news originating from the countries concerned.

Some of the news reported by some media organisations, especially on developing countries, was far from the fact and was distorted, he said.

"We need to get the real news, otherwise we will make wrong conclusions about our fellow members. So, there is no harm in having another source for comparison purpose...we should have at least another reference source," he told a press conference.

Dr Omar said other decisions reached by the heads of government would also be followed up with action.

They include issues on non-tariff barriers and intellectual property rights, especially those related to indigenous resources.

He said this year's dialogue had also formed a new group to link ministers and senior government officials of participating countries.

"The formation of this group among ministers and senior government officials will enable them to interact not only during the dialogue but also the period from this dialogue to the next," he said.

Such interactions are important because matters decided by the heads of government had to be acted upon by ministers and senior government officials.

Smart partnership groups which were set up earlier to enhance communication are those on labour, media, social agenda and business link.

-- BERNAMA

AZZ YBY