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Exploring scheme further to aid developing countries

LEADERS of southern African nations, representatives from other developing regions and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will sit at the dialogue table today, for the 10th time in five years.

Their agenda: To further explore how the Smart Partnership concept can be applied to assist emerging economies to face future challenges.

They will assemble at Berjaya Langkawi Beach & Spa Resort in Teluk Burau for four days, this time for a discourse on how the concept can help them to effectively weather the challenges of new global trends.

The leaders met in Maputo, Mozambique, in August last year to deliberate, among other things, on how to face the onslaught of globalisation upon developing economies.

In Maputo, the leaders were told by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that he was not convinced that developed nations would ever allow them to compete on a "level playing field" in a globalised world.

All the participating leaders agreed, some silently, that globalisation brought risk to the nations and their people.

The leaders were also resolute in their determination to fight the Western media's portrayal of the developing world.

At the end of the Global 2000-Southern Africa Dialogue in the Mozambican capital, media partners, business and labour leaders, and heads of state and government reached a consensus that the establishment of a news network and close co-operation among developing countries would help them fight biased reporting by the Western media.

The dynamics of how the negative aspects of globalisation can be tackled remain on the leaders' agenda.

Of similar significance is the meeting set between editors and leaders for a special session on media-related issues.

The editors are expected to suggest to the leaders how media corporations in developing countries can work together to fight the Western media's bias.

Dr Mahathir had suggested in Maputo that the Internet is the best option because it is not costly.

Then there is the fact that many mainstream newspapers have gone online. This should facilitate the exchange of news between Asian and African countries.

It has been suggested that a website named "post office" be set up for Asian and South African nations. The website will enable the users to "post and collect" reports of other countries on issues pertaining to the two regions.

The disciples of the Smart Partnership concept are growing.

"Action will be one of the focal points of this dialogue. We will talk about how to consolidate and advance the smart partnership concept," said Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT) chairman Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman.

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