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Mahathir-SNNI

MAHATHIR TO LAUNCH SNNI IN KAMPALA ON SATURDAY

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to launch the Smart News Network International (SNNi), a news exchange programme to counter inaccurate reporting on developing countries, in Kampala, Uganda, on Saturday.

It will be jointly launched with Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni in conjunction with the four-day Global 2001 Southern Africa International Dialogue (SAID) to be held at Speke Resort, a lakeside township on the shores of Lake Victoria, about 15km away from the Ugandan capital, beginning Thursday.

Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman, who is the Prime Minister's special representative to the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management, the organiser for SAID, said SNNI "will disseminate balanced and accurate news".

He said foreign wire services controlled by media practitioners in the West more often than not dish out inaccurate news affecting developing countries.

That was why SNNi needs to be established to offer another view on contemporary issues affecting the Third World, he told a news conference here today.

At the same time, SNNi will create better and closer understanding between the peoples of the participating developing countries and which possibly evolve into a South News Agency to rival established wire agencies.

Media organisations from seven African countries and four from Malaysia -- Bernama, the Malaysian national news agency; The New Straits Times; The Star; and Utusan Malaysia -- are the initial participating members in SNNi.

The African participants include the Daily News of Botswana, Mozambique News Agency, Namibia Today, Buanews of South Africa, New Vision of Uganda and the Herald of Zimbabwe.

Bernama has offered to host the SNNi Secretariat until such time when the network can stand on its own.

Omar, who was former science advisor to the prime minister, said participating organisations would contribute appropriate news items, features, photographs, video images on a daily basis through the Internet to the SNNi website -- www.SNNi.org.

Anyone is free to use and reproduce these news items provided due acknowledgement of the source is made.

SNNi will also offer training facilities to journalists and media personnel among participating members.

Omar said the idea of a news exchange among developing countries was first mooted at the Langkawi International Dialogue in 2000 and later further discussed at the Global 2000 SAID in Maputo, Mozambique, last year.

He also said media organisations from Southern African countries, Malaysia and elsewhere, which subscribe to the concept of smart partnership, were eligible to become members of SNNi.

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