

20 AUG 2001  
SNNI-Launching  
SOUTH NEWS NETWORK PORTAL LAUNCHED IN UGANDA

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

KAMPALA, Aug 20 (Bernama) -- The Smart News Network International (SNNi), a news exchange network within the ambit of South-South Smart Partnership, was officially launched Monday, providing developing countries an alternative view of contemporary issues affecting them.

The network was jointly launched by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Global 2001 Smart Partnership International Dialogue at the Speke Resort in Munyonyo Village, some 15km from here.

SNNi ([www.SNNi.org](http://www.SNNi.org)) entails the contribution of news items by participating media organisations from Africa and Malaysia to a common website on the Internet.

Among the participating organisations from Africa are The New Vision of Uganda, the Mozambique News Agency of Mozambique, The Herald of Zimbabwe, the Daily News of Botswana, Namibia Today of Namibia, Bua News of South Africa and Seychelles Nation of Seychelles.

From Malaysia, the organisations involved are the national news agency Bernama, which hosts the SNNi secretariat, The New Straits Times, The Star and Utusan Malaysia.

These organisations are expected to post a few news items daily on the website.

On Sunday, Museveni, Mozambique's President Joaquim Alberto Chissano and Dr Mahathir signed the Munyonyo-Kampala Declaration on Media which paved the way for the formal establishment of SNNi as a further exercise of freedom of opinion and expression.

The private venture is also made possible with the registration of a company in Malaysia, Smart News Network International Sdn Bhd, with a paid-up capital of RM100,000.

Utusan Malaysia executive chairman Kamarul Ariffin told journalists here that SNNi would be an alternative news source to provide for balanced reporting on developing countries.

"This is something tangible that has come out of the smart partnership dialogues between developing countries," he said.

Eventually the network should include the electronic and broadcast media, he said.

However, he said that "we are not competing with or out to replace anybody; we are just providing a different viewpoint by an additional channel."

He said that Seychelles and Mauritius are keen to join the SNNi.

-- BERNAMA

MR MFJ YBY