

18 OCT 2002

Khalil-Gateway

M'SIA TO ESTABLISH SOUTH-SOUTH INFORMATION GATEWAY, SAYS KHALIL

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Oct 18 (Bernama) -- Malaysia proposes to establish a media centre known as the South-South Information Gateway (SSIG) in its effort to provide first-hand and authentic sources of news and information from the South countries.

Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob said today the centre would act as a depository for all news and TV programmes within the South fraternity.

"The basic idea of this initiative is to promote the best interest of the countries of the South through the exchange of news material where the South's perspective will be emphasised," he said at the opening of the seventh conference of Asean ministers responsible for information, here.

Khalil said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad mooted the idea of the SSIG during the Langkawi International Dialogue in 1999.

Dr Mahathir had then expressed the importance of smart partnership that needs to be applied by all nations for the sake of mutual prosperity and equal benefit sharing among the South countries, he said.

Khalil said Malaysia and the South countries had already launched the Smart News Network International (SNNI) last year, and it would be a component of the SSIG.

"It is hoped that with the exchange of news materials and programmes among the South-South countries, we would be able to counter the erroneous views and opinions as well as negative perceptions of the Western media and in return will be able to transmit information directly to our clients," he said.

Presently, the minister said, western-oriented reports were giving their own views, including on the system practised in South countries, either with inputs from local sources or by "instant experts" who write extensively and authoritatively after being in a particular country for just a few days.

"These so-called experts tend to come with a pre-ordained expectation or impression of that country and proceed to find the evidence to bolster their theory, be it on the issue of human rights or haze or whatever strikes the fancy of the newspaper or agency which sent them," he said.

Khalil also said that Malaysia had always taken serious steps towards the promotion of greater Asean awareness among its people.

Its media and information services, both public and private, had played an important role in disseminating information and news about Asean.

The Malaysian public media had undertaken to present Asean in their various programmes while its print media had been supportive of the government's efforts to promote Asean among its people and the international community, he said.

Its electronic media had also taken an active and positive role in promoting Asean in their daily programmes.

On Asean, Khalil said that the nations of Southeast Asia had managed to bind themselves in friendship and cooperation in the regional grouping through joint efforts and sacrifices for their peoples and for their blessings of peace, freedom and prosperity.

Although there were times they had disputes of varying magnitude with their neighbours, the problems were resolved through peaceful means, he added.

"This feature in intra-Asean relations is the pillar of the grouping's

stability and dynamism," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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