

Penyampai : TAN SRI ABDUL HALIM ALI
Tajuk : THE LAUNCH OF THE SECOND GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE CONFERENCE
Lokasi : PEARL ROOM HOTEL MANDARIN ORIENTAL KUALA LUMPUR
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On behalf of the Government of Malaysia and the National Information Technology Council, I am very pleased to announce that the Second Global Knowledge Conference - GKII - will be held in Kuala Lumpur from 7 to 10 March Year 2000. We view the GKII to be hosted by Malaysia as one of the most important events in the new century that will help shape the future of global governance. GKII will look at the special challenges facing communities and nations in the rapidly changing information and communications environment.

2. All of you are well aware of the impact that the information revolution is already making on our social and economic institutions, on public and private sector bureaucracies, and on the man in the streets.....changing the way we do everything. While it holds the promise of a better life for everyone, it also threatens to create a huge disparity between the information-haves and the information-have-nots, the knowledge-rich and the knowledge-poor.

3. This growing digital divide was the single driving concern of the first Global Knowledge Conference where more than 2000 people representing governments, international agencies, non-profit organisations, private sector corporations and NGOs, met in Toronto, Canada in 1997. It became obvious that the countries which were either unaware of, or did not have the means to harness the new tools of the information age, would be powerless to improve the quality of life of their peoples.

4. The first Global Knowledge Conference recognised that knowledge and information are critical for sustainable, and equitable development. Out of the conference there evolved an informal but powerful partnership of organisations now known as the Global Knowledge Partnership. It currently has 55 members.

They are all committed to sharing information, experiences and resources to help people acquire the knowledge and technology they need in order to shape their lives.

5. GKII is part of this ongoing process of sharing and learning. Dialogues and discussion at national and regional levels on issues of access, empowerment and governance - the three themes of the GKII - have already begun and will continue after March 2000.

6. Access to ideas and information from around the world are already empowering people to improve their lives. There are some dramatic examples of how the power of information can not just improve lives but also help save them. We know of how the Pan American Health Organisation conducted a hemisphere-wide teleconference to present new methods of diagnosing and preventing the spread of AIDS. Yet in countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia where the spread of AIDS is threatening a whole generation of young people, these support networks are not yet in place.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. With GKII and the Global Knowledge Partnership, we have a tremendous opportunity to draft an agenda for action that will give developing countries a fair and equitable share in the new knowledge economy. The whole event is being specially designed to ensure that the four days of discussion, debate, sharing of information, experiences, best practices and even failures, will result in a strategic plan of action to help us build knowledge societies.

8. Represented here today are members of the diplomatic corps, the corporate sector, NGOs, government agencies, the media and the community. Each of you has a very important role to play in the success of GKII. Your active involvement at national, regional and global levels is critical to the success of this conference. Let us jointly contribute our resources to leverage this strategic opportunity to shape our future.

9. Malaysia has set her own agenda for transformation into a knowledge-based economy by the year 2020. GKII will help us identify and address issues critical to the realisation of this vision. We can share our own experiences and highlight some of our achievements with regard to the implementation of the National IT Agenda and the Multimedia Super Corridor initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. Perhaps our greatest challenge is to open people's minds to the tremendous possibilities offered by shared information and knowledge. As host for GKII, Malaysia feels that the challenge should begin here. Ideally, every Malaysian should know about GKII, the Global Knowledge Partnership and the power of the new communications tools. We are hoping for your support, particularly the media, in publicising the issues and challenges for knowledge development, and the objectives and activities of GKII and the Global Knowledge Partnership.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. I would like to thank you all for joining us this afternoon. We look forward to your strong support of the GKII Conference.