

Preparing for e-learning

MALAYSIA is a regional leader in providing international education but it cannot afford to rest on its laurels. The country has to keep pace with the rapid developments in tertiary education, otherwise it may be overtaken by its keen competitors like Hong Kong and Singapore.

With this in mind, Inti College will be organising its inaugural International Conference on E-Education 2001 (ICEE) later this month.

Aimed at synergising regional experiences towards the common goal of raising educational standards, the conference will focus on the implementation and management of information and communication technologies in e-education, with special emphasis on the quality of education and the effectiveness of e-learning.

Says Inti chairman Tan Yew Sing, education is confronted with a changing landscape as the "e" environment assumes a central role in determining the future direction and focus of the sector.

"Malaysia has to prepare itself for the onslaught (of e-education) that is becoming more and

more apparent," he says, adding that accompanying this change is the rising consumption of education.

Tan explains that this means tertiary education has to move beyond training young school leavers to include working adults.

He further opines that to best adapt to these changing trends, education providers have to work together towards the common goal of developing the sector.

The ICEE, organised by Inti Foundation, is also in conjunction with the college's on-going 15th anniversary celebrations.

The conference aims to bring together educators, researchers, technologists as well as those who implement e-education from around the world to discuss pertinent issues that would determine the future of the industry vis-a-vis e-learning.

Among the plenary speakers at the conference is Malaysia's Open University president Tan Sri Dr Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad, who will be presenting a paper on the history and experiences in open education in some Asia-Pacific countries; plus the challenges they face.

Other presenters include Prof Datuk Ibrahim Ahmad Bajunid from Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (Unitar), Prof Anthony Zwart from Lincoln University in New Zealand, Prof Roy Leitch from Heriot-Watt University in the United Kingdom and Prof Andrew Day from Bradford University, also from the UK.

There will also be representatives from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Tsing Hua University in China, University of Adelaide in Australia, Troy State University in the US and NextEd, Australia, a Hong Kong-based company that partners with higher education institutions to digitise their infrastructure.

Tan says that this vast range of presenters will provide a broad perspective on e-learning.

"A lot of the time people are focused on problems plaguing the education sector. We have to move on — overcome the problems and look beyond them," he adds.

Inti is gearing-up for the e-learning era via its e-campus model aimed at getting students wired. While much has been done and invested towards this effort, Tan questions: "How

much online constitutes 'online'?"

He says the ICEE will address such issues as it tries to foster a better understanding and readiness for the e-learning onslaught that is to come.

"If we are complacent, we will be left behind," he states bluntly.

The ICEE will be held at the Mines Beach Resort and Spa, Kuala Lumpur on Oct 29 and 30. To be opened by Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Amar Leo Moggie, the conference will include plenary sessions which will be held in the morning and break-up sessions in the afternoon.

Proceeds from the conference will go to the Inti Foundation — a charitable organisation that aims to channel educational and welfare support to society — which has also sponsored educational forums and talks on various issues.

□ For further information call the ICEE 2001 Secretariat at 06-798 2000/26 ext. 2354, fax 06-799 7513/31, e-mail icee2001@inti-mal.edu.my or check out the website <http://ecampus.inti.edu.my/icee2001>.