

Women leaders gather to make deals.

stimes0020010715dx4r006hx

346 Words

27 April 2001

Straits Times

English

(c) 2001 Singapore Press Holdings Limited

About 250 of them are here for a two-day business conference

A GROUP of influential women are making friends and striking deals, not while playing golf but at a two-day business conference held in Singapore for the first time. About 250 women leaders from 20 countries are attending the International Women's Forum (IWF) conference which begins today to discuss ways to form business ventures, invest in new markets and enhance their roles as global citizens. The IWF, founded in 1982, is an organisation that makes connections for women all over the world at the highest level of government, business and non-governmental organisations. It has 3,500 members in about 20 countries. IWF hosts two conferences a year - a national one in the United States and another in various other countries. This is the first time the conference has come to Singapore. Ms Tisa Ng, chairman of the conference organising committee, said: 'The conference will help women to look for alternative ways - when mainstream routes are closed - to get into business or get projects off the ground. 'It is also a good time for us to show Singapore to the women leaders in the world.' IWF (Singapore) was formed in 1997 and its current chairman is Dr Jennifer Lee, chief executive officer of KK Women's and Children's Hospital. IWF gave out awards to two companies for their outstanding commitment to the equality and progress of women. The first went to United Overseas Bank Group of Singapore (UOB) for running the United Global Unifem Singapore Fund, Singapore's first ethical fund. The fund - a joint project with the Singapore charter of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (Unifem) - invests only in firms which provide equal opportunities to women and have family-oriented labour practices. The bank also uses a merit system which has resulted in more women holding management positions. The other company is American-based Pillsbury Winthrop, a law firm with 16 offices in five countries. It was recognised for its family-friendly policies, promoting women to leadership positions, and for giving pro bono (free) legal services to organisations devoted to helping women's rights.