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#### AST COMPUTER TO SET UP ASSEMBLY OPERATIONS IN MSC

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 22 (Bernama) -- Hot on the heels of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's just-concluded mission to sell the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) to the world, California-based AST Computer has voiced its intention to set up an assembly plant in the MSC by the year's end.

A personal computer (PC) manufacturer, AST Computer would be able to assemble a complete PC at its proposed plant expected to take off in September or October, its managing director for Southeast Asian operations Sam Ghebranius said today.

The assembly plant, which will be operated on Final Configuration and Test Procedures (FCTP) or build-on-order (BOD) basis, would cater for demand in the local and Southeast Asian markets.

Ghebranius said: "The decision to set up the assembly plant here is in line with the Malaysian government's call to bring in as many big information technology players to locate their operations in the RM2 billion MSC."

Many government initiatives that encourage technology adoption had made Malaysia an interesting market for AST, he added.

Ghebranius was speaking to reporters after the signing of an agreement between AST Computers and Services (M) Sdn Bhd and NCR (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd for customer support facilities here.

He said the proposed plant, which would have one production line initially assembling up to 1,000 units of PC a day, would further enhance the delivery and availability of stocks to AST customers in the region.

The company would bring in the core PC components for assembly here, such as hard-drives, disk-drives, memory chips and power supply unit from AST's three manufacturing facilities in China, Ireland and Texas.

Studies and tests would be conducted to enable the plant to assemble a complete PC to meet local requirements and specifications.

On its regional operations, Ghebranius said the Southeast Asian region had become one of AST's fastest growing markets with an increase in business volume of 130 percent from 1995 to 1996. AST's world-wide sales last year was estimated at US\$2 billion (RM5 billion).

In Malaysia, the company commanded a four percent share of the local PC market totalling 320,000 units per year.

AST's presence here began in August 1993 with the establishment of AST Computers and Services Malaysia which markets and distributes AST's range of desktop PCs -- Bravo, Manhattan, Premmia, Ascentia and Advantage!.

The company also provides after sales-services and technical support undertaken by highly-skilled PC system engineers and technicians.

Headquartered in Irvine, California, AST Computer employs more than 6,000 workers worldwide.

It recently formed a strategic alliance with South Korean electronics giant, Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd, for component supply and joint product development, Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) arrangement and cross-licensing of patents.

Under the agreement signed today, NCR Malaysia was appointed by AST Computer Malaysia to provide on-site warranty and repair support for AST products.

Ghebranius said NCR was chosen due to its extensive network of 17 Engineering Support Centres and four resident engineers, strategically

located throughout Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei. --  
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