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Britain wants to establish bigger presence in MSC

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BRITAIN plans to step up its presence in the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) in the near future. It is at present represented by only one company.

The UK Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has started to push for more British technology leaders, including British Telecoms and Rolls-Royce, in the Malaysian multimedia test-bed.

A UK government-sponsored seminar on the MSC will be held in Britain this week.

"It is not enough to have Madge Networks in the MSC line-up when there are many other UK-based companies that can offer their expertise in the development of the MSC," said Mr Steve Buckley, the first secretary at the British High Commission in Kuala Lumpur.

Madge Networks chairman and chief executive officer Robert Madge is the only British representative on the MSC International Advisory Panel (IAP).

The IAP, which will advise the Government on the MSC's plans and related policies, also includes Microsoft CEO Bill Gates, IBM CEO Louis Gerstner, Sun Microsystems chairman, president and CEO Scott McNealy, and Japan's Nippon, Telegraph and Telephone senior executive vice-president Noboru Miyawaki.

The IAP held its first meeting in the US in January, chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Buckley said the authorities in London have decided that Britain must not lag behind the US and Japan in making an impact on the MSC. The DTI and the High Commission have thus embarked on a concerted drive to encourage British firms to participate in the MSC.

He said not many British companies are aware of the MSC's potentials because they are ill-informed of the real concept behind it.

Apart from Madge Networks, he said, there are several established British companies which can contribute to the development of the MSC, such as British Telecom and Rolls-Royce.

To create an awareness on the MSC, Buckley said the British High Commission will liaise with government agencies and organisations such as Multimedia Development Corp (MDC), the corporatised entity that develops, facilitates and promotes the MSC, to organise seminars and talks on the project in the UK.

For a start, he said the High Commission and the DTI have invited MDC chief operating officer Dr Mohamed Arif Nun to speak at the seminar to provide first-hand information on the MSC to UK-based companies.

"Dr Mohamed Arif will speak at the one-day seminar in Cambridge this week. The seminar will be held concurrently with another seminar on biotechnology," he added.

Buckley said it would provide greater impact if Dr Mahathir could include the UK as one of his stop-overs during the MSC roadshow to Europe in May. He said British companies would be able to showcase their expertise if Dr Mahathir could include UK in the roadshow.

"We are really serious in wanting to promote the MSC among the British companies as well as other companies in the UK. It is not just because the giant IT companies such as Microsoft are there but we feel there is still potential even for our small and medium enterprises," he added.

Buckley also said British companies should not feel inferior merely because some multimedia giants are already in the MSC but should see the

project as potentially viable for the development of regional and global networking in the IT industry.

"The MSC is not for Microsoft alone. We tend to lose if British companies hesitate to participate in this massive project," he added.

Buckley said the UK Government is keen on all seven flagship applications in the MSC. The seven are the electronic government, smart schools, telemedicine, research and development clusters, national multipurpose card, borderless marketing centres, and worldwide manufacturing webs.

"There are British companies that can contribute to every application to be implemented in the MSC. We will also try to promote the MSC in the UK not only to companies operating in England but also in Scotland and Wales, for example.

"It is easier to understand the MSC concept if you are staying in Kuala Lumpur. But to promote the MSC among companies operating in the UK, we need to go back and brief the entrepreneurs," Buckley said.

He added that the British Government hopes the seminar in Cambridge will do the trick to generate interest in the MSC among UK firms. More than 150 companies are expected to participate in the seminar.

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