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Intelligent city brain of MSC

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"THE best place in the world to do your thing," grandly proclaims Dr Mohamed Arif Nun, chief operating officer of the Multimedia Development Corporation.

He was speaking about Malaysia's pride and joy - the Multimedia Super Corridor - to a group of lawyers gathered at an international law conference last week.

And in the very heart of this much-promoted MSC where the "things" will be done is Cyberjaya. This is the nucleus of the MSC, along with twin-sister Putrajaya which will be the electronic government's administrative centre.

Collectively, the twins are known as Megajaya.

Cyberjaya's name says it all. This will be a city devoted heart and soul to the wonders of information technology. It will be a zone to link Malaysia to the world, in a big way and the MSC's backbone of development in IT and multimedia technology.

It might not be too far off the mark to describe it as the brain of the MSC.

Cyberjaya takes up a choice corner of the 750km square (15 X 50km) MSC. Located to the west of Putrajaya, this "intelligent city" occupies 7,000 hectares.

"Intelligent" because of the most advanced physical and soft infrastructure which will serve it.

This includes a 2.5-10 gigabit telecommunications network to be built by Telekom Malaysia, state-of-the-art IT and multimedia services, efficient and convenient transportation system and advanced business facilities.

The soft infrastructure refers to the attractive and competitive financial incentives and cyberlaws, set in place to create a model multimedia community.

These little tid bits of information on Cyberjaya, ambitious and impressive-sounding morsels at that, have been well-publicised.

But what's exactly on site right now? A quiet plantation road, plenty of land clearing and earthworks.

And clearly plenty of hard work too, toil which must continue at top speed for some time yet. For in less than two years, the pioneer settler-companies are expected to begin operating in Cyberjaya.

The initial deadline was 1999 but was rescheduled for next year. The first phase will buzz to life by next April.

This includes the Multimedia University and the development of the first parcel of 750 hectares of the Flagship Zone. The latter which carves out 2,800 hectares of Cyberjaya, is set aside for various specialised functions embodying the aspirations of the city.

The self-imposed early deadline, MDC executive chairman Tan Sri Othman Yeop Abdullah had said, was due to the great deal of interest shown by companies wanting to come into Cyberjaya.

"It is also aimed at instilling confidence among investors. They are a bit impatient because they see nothing is happening... actually lots of things are happening," he had said.

Othman said this to reporters two months ago when speaking on the progress of Cyberjaya.

In many ways, "lots of things" have certainly happened. A total of 750 hectares of land in Sepang have been acquired, an Environmental Impact

Assessment was prepared by University Putra and submitted to the Department of Environment. The DOE had requested several amendments and this was done. The EIA is now approved.

Furthermore, 34 companies (19 foreign and 15 local) have committed themselves to setting up base in Cyberjaya. And seven companies have identified specific locations in the city. They are the Multimedia University, Telekom Malaysia Complex, PNB Information Technology Complex, TV3 Multimedia Complex, Nippon Telegraph & Telephone Corporation's research and development complex, Golden Hope Plantations corporate headquarters and MDC.

A grand launch has also been planned for today, and in keeping with this IT city's intelligent stature, the day-long party will be gloriously hi-tech.

A Smart Card, Moonraker-style earth-breaking machine and 34 hot-air balloons are all part of the show.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who has personally shouldered the task of propelling Malaysia into cyber-era, will do the honours.

Clearly and without doubt, "lots of things" have already happened, admirably unclogged by bureaucracy or a normally slow-grinding approval system.

But above all, among the "lots of things" which are the most important, must surely be the planning process. Though this might be a case of stating the obvious, this cyberworld can only be built with the backing of sound plans.

This unseen backstage process of tedious hammering out the concepts, designs and tiniest details, have been carried out without fanfare.

The design guidelines and development principles, which have been made known, are indeed impressive, and forms a solid foundation for a modern and intelligent Cyberjaya.

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