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## Meeting of minds

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WHEN THE idea for the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) was first mooted several years back, the whole concept of the MSC seemed overwhelming, exciting and daunting. Everyday the nation comes a step closer to realising the MSC dream.

After a successful first run last year, Multimedia Asia (MMA) '97 will be the platform from which the MSC will take off and soar. 'MMA '97 will propel us from the point of vision to reality and benchmarking smart solutions is our only hope of meeting all our goals and visions,' says Tengku Datuk Dr Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen, permanent secretary of the National Information Technology Council (NITC) and CEO of Mimos Bhd, two of the joint organisers of MMA '97.

This year's theme, Moving MSC From Vision to Reality: Benchmarking Smart Solutions, will aptly concentrate on bringing the MSC vision into fruition and reality. Cited as the biggest multimedia event in Asia, the MMA '97 conference and exhibition is specially designed to attract and garner the interest of potential investors to build their regional hub in the MSC. While last year's MMA was focused on the exploration of possibilities within the MSC project, MMA '97 will focus on action-oriented implementation and operational issues.

To be held from Sept 16 to 19, MMA '97 will occupy a space of 3,700 square metres and host about 200 companies involved in electronics manufacturing, multimedia applications, networking infrastructure, ISDN and IT hardware and software. Some 30,000 people are expected to attend the event at The Mines Resort City. Touted as the first intelligent exhibition centre in Asia, the Mines is fully equipped with fibre optics, Internet facilities and integrated services digital network lines (ISDN lines). The event is jointly organised by Miller Freeman Sdn Bhd, the NITC, Mimos, Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC) and Putrajaya Holdings Sdn Bhd.

'Smart solutions is what the MMA '97 is primarily about. MMA '97 will be the platform for the meeting of minds; a place where the thinkers and implementors of innovative multimedia solutions will have the distinct opportunity of presenting their solutions for the seven MSC flagship applications or to service the needs of our twin intelligent cities, Putrajaya and Cyberjaya,' explains Dr Michel Akavi, senior vice president of Miller Freeman.

'The MSC is a huge project so it needs every bit of the society, the government, the private sector within Malaysia and without, to work in tandem because its success hinges on the fact that everybody does it concurrently; it's like a snowballing effect,' adds Akavi. Thus the conference and exhibition work as a networking platform where people 'matchmake' their needs and wants as seamlessly as possible. Among the exhibitors who will be present at the event, the majority - approximately 55 to 60 per cent - is foreign, 10 to 20 per cent local and the remainder is made up of joint-venture companies. The list of exhibitors is varied; among them are Cyberjaya, Lityan, MDC, Microsoft Corporation and Fujitsu. Currently, about 85 per cent of the floor space has been taken up. Raw space for the exhibition costs RM700 per square metre and has a minimum of 18 square metres while the shell space costs RM800 per sq m with a minimum of 12 sq m. Visitors to MMA '97 can attend the event by registration.

In addition to showcasing the various flagship applications of the MSC, there will be a concurrent three-day conference involving the country's leaders, policy makers, government officials and leading experts from the top IT companies in the world. They will be deliberating and exchanging information on the development of multimedia technology, application in general and further developments of the MSC. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will officiate the opening of the conference and the exhibition on Sept 16 while Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim will moderate the conference and deliver the concluding address.

`This is simply the mother of all multimedia conferences,' enthuses Akavi. One of the interesting features to look out for at the MMA '97 will be the Entrepreneurs' Village. This is basically an area where young entrepreneurs can hook up their notebooks or laptops on to the Internet lines at the centre for a minimum full service charge. This scheme is specially for young entrepreneurs, who have limited start-up capital but have ideas to solutions and designs, to showcase their knowledge in the exhibition. `I would like to see real entrepreneurs there, be they young with ponytails or rings,' quips Akavi. `The more the better, actually, because this is the kind of culture, the guys from Silicon Valley that we want.'

The exhibition floor plan itself is unique because its set up emulates the model of a web (imagine a cobweb) and is supposed to subtly draw in the visitors to linger around the exhibits. Entry into the exhibition hall will be quite an experience. Visitors travel through the MSC Virtual Walkway filled with special effects before entering the exhibition hall proper.

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