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Multimedia expo a boon to MSC

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ARE there any parallels between the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) and the Silicon Valley in the US?

Obviously yes, but for one important fact.

The Silicon Valley "happened" by itself, so to speak, compared to the MSC which is structured from top to bottom, guided collectively by the Malaysian Government and the private sector, says Mr Michel Akavi of Miller Freeman, the world's largest trade fair and trade magazines organisation.

In an interview with Business Times, Akavi says he believes that the MSC can also be similarly compared to the national car manufacturer, Proton.

However, instead of exporting cars, it will be exporting software abroad at a high speed.

Akavi said that a software package produced by an MSC company may be sent through wire to the US to be packaged and released immediately or websites may be designed in Malaysia and instantly sold to Austria.

Akavi, who is the senior vice president (Asia) of Miller Freeman, may specialise in exhibitions but he has a strong background in economics.

He graduated with a Doctorate in Economy from Sorbonne University in Paris and a Master in Business Administration from the Amiens Business School, also in France.

At Miller Freeman Pte Ltd in Singapore, he oversees the company's offices and trade fairs in the Asia-Pacific region, including Malaysia.

Akavi has also worked as president, Asia Pacific for Reed Exhibition Companies which organised, among others, the Malaysia Microelectronics Fair and Malbex Building and Construction Exhibition. Both are the largest of their kind in Malaysia.

He started his career as a market researcher with the French Market Research Bureau, BREF, and then came to Asia as Far East representative, based in Tokyo.

He then moved on to be regional managing director for Frank Small & Associates (SEA) Sdn Bhd from 1985 to 1993, until he joined Reed Exhibition Companies.

When asked about Miller Freeman's role in the Multimedia Asia 1997 Conference which is to be held concurrently with the Multimedia Asia Conference and Exhibition 1997 (MMA 97), he said that it is one of his firm's most challenging projects so far.

Akavi said that this conference will act as a learning melting pot that will bring together country leaders, policy-makers, government officials, decision-makers and captains of top IT companies from around the world.

These individuals will discuss key issues, challenges and resolutions for smart solutions related to security, legal, social, commercial and environmental concerns.

The MMA 97 - a showcase for MSC-type solutions to real problems within an Asian setting, is expected to provide an excellent platform for all visionaries, system integrators, consultants and key players of multimedia smart solutions.

The exhibition will also allow multimedia-related companies from all over the world to establish and develop smart partnerships with Malaysian entrepreneurs.

In fact, the inaugural MMA held in 1996 (MMA 96) marked a watershed in the history of Malaysia, according to Akavi.

It was during the MMA 96 that the MSC was officially launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and since then, the MSC has generated tremendous interest locally and internationally.

The success of MMA 96 has led to the decision to make it an annual international event for dialogues and evaluation on the progress of the MSC.

This year, MMA 97 will provide an excellent platform for benchmarking the best practices and offer a unique opportunity for all interested parties to participate in the MSC flagship applications.

MMA 97, which will also showcase solutions for the twin intelligent cities of Putrajaya and Cyberjaya in the MSC, will be a three-day event to be held at the Mines Resort City at Sri Kembangan, Selangor from September 16 to September 19.

The conference will be for two days from September 16-17 while a workshop will be held on September 18.

It will cost RM1,950 per participant for the conference and an additional RM1,000 per participant for the workshop.

The conference exhibition hall at Mines Resort City has a floor space of 20,000 sq m.

Wired with ISDN high speed lines as well as fibre optics, its facilities are exceptional even by US standards, Akavi said.

In a show of support for the MSC, the French, Swedish and Australian governments are expected to send their government-sponsored groups for the forthcoming conference, Akavi added.

According to Akavi, this year and every year after that, the conference will do a stock-take on what has been achieved during the year and what remains to be achieved in future.

The Prime Minister is expected to give the keynote address on the opening day of the conference.

Ministers, government officials as well as corporate leaders will act as invited moderators, session chairmen or speakers.

The National Information Technology Council, Multimedia Development Corp, Mimos Bhd, Putrajaya Holdings Sdn Bhd and Miller Freeman are among the organisers.

Miller Freeman will act as the event organiser while Asian Strategic Leadership Institute (Asli) will operate as the conference manager.

MMA 97, with the theme "Moving MSC from Vision to Reality: Benchmarking Smart Solutions" expects about 500 participants to attend this year, compared with 300 last year.

The number of visitors are expected to increase to 20,000, compared with 13,000 for the previous year.

Commenting on the benefits of the MSC, Akavi said that the companies joining the MSC will enjoy the rewards beyond the MSC's Bill of Guarantee.

Founding companies in the MSC of all sizes will have a direct access to the nation's leaders through membership in the international advisory panel, chaired by the Prime Minister or the founders' council which is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister.

The Bill of Guarantee will ensure that the MSC provides excellent physical and information infrastructure.

It will also provide unrestricted access for key overseas staff and their families, the lifting of company ownership and employment restriction, an undertaking to enforce cyberlaws as well as intellectual property protection.

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