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US physics grad awarded scholarship by Malaysian companies

K.P.Waran in New York

TWO Malaysian companies, in their bid to acquire sophisticated technology in the micro-chip manufacturing process, awarded on Saturday a scholarship to a State University of New York physics graduate who helped discover how to make a flexible semiconductor.

The discovery of flexible semiconductors could revolutionise the manufacture and applications of products, including expediting the transition from electronic computers to optical computers, by allowing users to exploit optics in semiconductors much more efficiently.

Iris Technologies and TL Technology Research, which have established their plants at the Technology Park near Sepang, presented the scholarship to Na Myung Hee, who is of South Korean descent, to continue her research at the university on techniques to mass produce the chip.

The chief executive officer of both the companies, Chas Yap, who presented the scholarship said his firms were also negotiating with the university and the students involved in inventing the chip for the right to manufacture it.

"The Malaysian Government is proud to be able to support the ground-breaking work of these students.

"This is an extremely important invention that will greatly benefit all those involved in manufacturing high-tech products for the 21st century.

"Furthermore, the co-operation between Malaysia and the US will be a great boost for our growing 'Silicon Valley' corridor outside of Kuala Lumpur," he said during the scholarship presentation ceremony at the Malaysian mission to the United Nations.

Na said her work to produce the new chip had taken two years and the scholarship would help her reduce her teaching assignments and concentrate on carrying on with her research.

"It was a joint effort with other students and we are proud of the recognition for our discovery as well as the upcoming manufacture of flexible semiconductors.

"This will lead to advances in optical computing where information is carried by light rather than electronics," she said.

Stephen N. Weiss, with the law firm Graham and James, said during the ceremony that his company played a key role in bringing the parties together.

He said during the visit of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Boston recently, Dr Mahathir had met with key Silicon Valley leaders to discuss closer co-operation between the US and Malaysia in developing a new high-tech manufacturing sector.

He said the project was a culmination of a 10-month long process of searching for the right invention and negotiating to be involved in the project.

Saw Ching Hong, the Consul-General at the Malaysian consulate in New York, described the event as a major step in US-Malaysia technical co-operation especially since it was spearheaded by the private sector.

He said more such co-operation would help Malaysia achieve the developed nation status envisioned by the Government by the year 2020.

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