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## Area to ride out economic problems

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Multimedia Super Corridor will ride out the country's current economic problem and be operating in full swing by the year 2005.

This expression of confidence was the overriding sentiment voiced by members and representatives of the MSC's International Advisory Panel today.

Chairman of Geneva-based Silicon Graphics World Trade Corporation, Bob Bishop, said he expected the economic situation to pick up in the next 12 months.

He said the company still expected much from its operations in Asean member countries, although the currency problem had caused business to slow down a little.

"Currently, Asean's contribution to our turnover is still small but we are looking at doubling the overall contribution from here to five per cent of the overall revenue."

Bishop, who is a member of the IAP, stressed that Asean had the potential to succeed as an IT centre since there was no shortage of brainpower and motivation among the population.

He said although Asean had only focussed on IT quite recently, it was adapting well and was catching up very quickly on more advanced regions.

"There is no barrier for Asean to expand quickly to become a leading technology zone and we expect this to happen, especially with the MSC project."

BCE Inc chief executive officer Lynton Wilson said he was "impressed" with the top-level commitment, ability and steps taken by the MSC's developers to implement the project, considering the unpredictability of high-tech ventures.

"I was immediately impressed with the high level of commitment to the project. The Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) is personally involved," he was quoted as saying in Msc.Com - the magazine published by the Multimedia Development Corporation which governs the MSC project.

Wilson, who is not attending the two-day IAP meeting in Cyberjaya, about 60km from Kuala Lumpur, said the Government had shown great foresight in planning and the MSC was a great leap for Malaysia into the information age.

Although the current unrest in the Asian markets may affect the region's short-term development, he said, the fundamental concept of the MSC was sound.

He added that participating companies were reassured by the lack of restrictions on the hiring of local and foreign knowledge workers, and the comprehensive protection for knowledge capital.

Meanwhile, Siemens Nixdorf information systems vice president Axel Hass said he was confident that Malaysians' education, productivity and professionalism would hasten the country's economic comeback and attract investments from big companies.

"Nowadays, everything is knowledge-based, which means your focus should be on people, not buildings, assets and machines," he said, projecting that Siemens' investments in Malaysia could be as high as US\$50 million (RM175 million) over the next 10 years.

Hass, who is an official representative at the IAP meeting, said he was impressed with the progress of the MSC's development since the first

meeting.

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