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MDC-APPLICATIONS

MDC RECEIVES 222 APPLICATIONS FOR MSC STATUS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 18 (Bernama) -- The Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC) has received 222 applications as of yesterday from world class information technology companies for Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) status.

Out of these, 146 applications have been approved, said Dr Mohd Ghazie Ismail, MDC's director for client services.

He told newsmen after a press conference by a Malaysian-Indian joint venture company, Aptech Worldwide Sdn Bhd, the 146th company to be awarded MSC status, that as at the end of the last year, total applications stood at 175.

Mohd Ghazie said the number of applications has grown despite the economic slowdown and he expected the trend to continue as the MSC, a branchchild of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, was moving ahead of schedule with more than 14 companies already having set up base in Cyberjaya.

He also said MDC itself had already moved to its new headquarters at Cyberjaya, which he pointed out was ahead of schedule.

"We were only expected to move to our headquarters by the end of 1999 and so were the 14 companies, but they have come on sooner than expected," he added.

Mohd Ghazie said with the MDC having set up base at Cyberjaya, more companies which had received MSC status would be shifting there as well.

Some of the international companies which had received MSC status include Lucent, Nokia, Intel, Ericsson and Motorola.

On funding requirements for some of the companies which had expressed interest to be part of the MSC, Mohd Ghazie said: "MDC, as the facilitator, is still discussing with banks as to how to tap funds from the "Tabung Industri Kecil dan Sederhana" (Small and Medium Industries Fund)."

There are many sources of the fund which include the Research & Development Fund, the Tabung IKS and venture capital, he said.

He, however, declined to comment on the extent of the responses received from the banks on funding requirements.

The chief operating officer of Aptech Worldwide, V.Sukumar, said the company which received its MSC status on May 19 this year, is an information technology education chain with over 1,000 centres in 10 countries.

Aptech is planning to use Malaysia as a regional hub to develop education in software engineering, telecommunications and networking, multimedia and specific software technologies, over the Internet and through a multimodal approach, which would combine video, CD-Rom and lab training.

The first such course to be offered soon will be in software engineering. It will promote the concept of learner centric training, where the student will pick the time and place he wants to study, said Sukumar.

He pointed out that many parents, who are now unable to send their children abroad for tertiary education due to the ringgit's depreciation, can now turn to quality education within the country.

Aptech's operations in Malaysia also covers consulting and IT projects and that the company was in the advanced stage of negotiating for two large multimedia projects here. -- BERNAMA

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