

12/02/1998

Meeting to help people better understand the MSC

Rashid Yusof; Marina Tan

THE whirl of publicity which the second meeting of the International Advisory Panel on the Multimedia Super Corridor today and tomorrow will stir, is increasingly seen as an opportunity to make the MSC plain to the common people.

This hope was expressed by Multimedia Development Corporation director for client services, Dr Muhammad Ghazie Ismail.

Like others, he saw having "wizards", computer moguls and strategist gurus converge upon Cyberjaya to discuss whether the MSC is on track, as also a means to help people better understand the MSC and everything it represents.

This has been echoed elsewhere too.

"It (the MSC) is not about technology," said Leong Seng Keat, managing director of Netcard Corporation Sdn Bhd, a MSC-status company, attempting to reach out to the masses.

"It is about how people's lives would change, about the e-lifestyle," he said.

The 80-odd MSC status companies already in operation are developing products including software customised for specific businesses, and thus may not be felt by a wider spectrum of the society.

For instance, the list says a German-owned firm is working on what the MDC lists as "regional initiative for multimedia and IT application design, development and customisation, training, education and information content development".

One Malaysian firm is developing "Web TV content and software development", another on "digitally-produced dramas, tele-features and computer-animated children's TV".

A Japanese firm is conducting "research and development for the customisation of Japanese software products for Asian markets".

Still, as the activities at MSC get into full swing, more of these products will have an impact on consumers.

One such innovation already known is the fun of buying movie tickets from the Internet kiosks that Netcard introduced, accessed by phone card-like smart cards.

While the nature of the deliberations in the next 48 hours cannot be tailored to calm nerves of everyone wary of technological changes, many will be able to relate to some of the topics discussed.

For the discussions will cover areas like e-commerce and tax implications, a common platform for smart cards, content development from Smart schools to universities, and societal effects of the Internet, with respect to censorship.

Other issues include the convergence of industries (particularly multimedia and telecommunications), the possible setting up of an International Cybercourt of Justice, enforcement of the Digital Signature Act and the proposed Multimedia Convergence Act, to be tabled in Parliament later this year.

There will also be a special session on whether the MSC is proceeding in the right direction, in terms of human resource development, physical infrastructure, a culture of research and development, and environmental concerns.

Those attending the meeting are Dr Stan Shih, chairman and chief executive officer of Acer Incorporated; Ambassador Diana Lady Dougan from

the Washington-based Centre for Strategic & International Studies; Lester Alberthal, chairman and chief executive officer of EDS Corporation; Prof William F. Miller of Graduate School of Business, Stanford University.

Robert Madge of Madge Networks; Motorola Inc chairman Gary Tooker; former CEO of Nets Inc Jim Manzi; Dr Kenichi Ohmae of Ohmae & Associates; chairman of Silicon Graphics World Trade International Division Bob Bishop; Alcatel Alsthom chairman and chief executive officer Serge Tchuruk; Ericsson president and chief executive officer Dr Lars Ramqvist; NEC chairman Dr Tadahiro Sekimoto; and Lucent Technologies chief operating officer Ben Verwaayan.

This meeting comes after the first held at the Stanford University in January last year. The IAP meeting to be chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, will comprise two sessions, on the MSC development and on global market trends in IT.

The role of the IAP is to advise the Government on strategic issues related to the MSC, such as infrastructure, policies and cyberlaws, marketing and incentives, and developing a domestic industry.

While last year's meeting was attended largely by people from the computer sector, panelists now include figures from telecommunications, content development, post-production and film industries - for example, Reuters CEO Peter Job and Motion Picture Association of America president Jack Valenti.

In line with the aim of keeping the MSC environment-friendly - 30 per cent of Cyberjaya is allotted for green space and the city is supposed to be free from traffic jams and pollution - the IAP members will take part in a tree-planting ceremony.

Three companies given MSC status - one local, one foreign and one local-foreign joint venture - will brief the panelists on their experience in translating the concept into reality.

To drive the point home, they will be given a helicopter tour for a bird's eye view of the MSC, a 750km square hub for the development of multimedia products and services.

Meanwhile, watching all these with interest will be the Malaysian public.

(END)