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Momentum of development in Cyberjaya building up

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THE fledgling business community of Cyberjaya, the country's first "intelligent" city, is expected to multiply by year-end, boosted by the completion of additional homes and high-tech office space.

In fact, the city - still in its early stage of development - and largely occupied by palm trees - should surpass the Government's target of 50 companies by December, said Datuk Karim Abu Bakar, chief executive officer of its primary developer Cyberview Sdn Bhd.

"Our work is already a year ahead of schedule and we have received tremendous response from local companies and multi-national corporations," he told the New Straits Times at his office in Taman Desa in Kuala Lumpur recently.

Cyberview is entrusted with developing the Flagship Zone, a 2,800-hectare area in the eastern half of Cyberjaya which has been designated as the catalyst for the development of the 7,000ha city.

As the master developer, Cyberview is responsible for building primary infrastructure and selling parcels of land to sub-developers and individual purchasers to develop according to their own specifications.

"We received a lot of requests to speed things up which, on the back of the economic downturn, was only possible through the Government's support, particularly that of the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister."

Cyberview, Karim said, intended to have more than oil palm trees up to welcome foreign visitors here for the Commonwealth Games in September and the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation meeting in November.

"At the moment, we are working together with infrastructure providers like Telekom Malaysia and the Public Works Department to install the 2.5 to 10 gigabit fibre-optics backbone and some of the major roads.

"By August, the fibre-optics backbone will be ready, and we will have about 140 apartments and about 50,000 square feet of office space ready by the end of the year," he said.

The new office space is in addition to the 25,000 square feet at Cyberview Lodge's MSC headquarters, already fully occupied by 11 information technology-based companies.

"The apartments will provide much needed housing to the knowledge workers.

"They may also house lecturers for Telekom Malaysia's Multimedia University, which will have its first phase ready around November and admit some 3,000 students by January," Karim said.

Karim said the Water Works Department, Tenaga Nasional Bhd and Petronas had assured him of "high-quality, efficient and uninterrupted supply of utilities" for Cyberjaya.

"We have also received good response from other developers interested in building up the Flagship Zone's commercial area.

"We have closed a deal with one in particular, who in two to three months' time will start building 150 medium- and high-cost apartments next to MMU, and one or two others have more or less confirmed," he said.

Far from slowing down, Karim said, the momentum of development in the Flagship Zone and in Cyberjaya would only continue to build up.

"Now there are about 150 companies with MSC status, 84 of which are already in operation around the Klang Valley. They must operate in Cyberjaya within two years," he said.

"In fact, apart from the 11 which have moved into Cyberview Lodge and

the 40-odd which have confirmed bookings, we are expecting another 30 agreements to be signed in the next couple of months."

Indeed, the Multimedia Development Corporation has done such a good marketing job that even before Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad performed the ground-breaking ceremony last May, 34 companies had confirmed bookings for space within Cyberjaya and seven had actually identified specific locations in the city.

Early birds are given an incentive to sign up for freehold land in Cyberjaya - six months' free Internet service, plus a 25 per cent discount on the fee of RM4 per square foot.

Development of the Flagship Zone itself will be carried out in two main phases, with Phase One (1997 to 2006) focusing on providing a conducive working environment for IT/multimedia industries and commercial requirements.

Phase Two, from 2000 to 2011, will concentrate on meeting the requirement for world-class green living.

"Even now, you can see that many of the roads we are building are rather curvy, and we only cut down trees on actual building sites when necessary in order to preserve the natural contours of the landscape," Karim said.

The city will also aim to epitomise the concept of masyarakat madani (civil society) through social engineering - allocations for low-cost housing.

"We have provided housing for the lower income group and we may also insist that other developers in the Flagship Zone allocate land for low- and medium-cost housing," he said.

Residents of Cyberjaya and "sister city" Putrajaya will also share access to a high-tech City Control Centre, which centralises information on traffic, utility, weather, home/business security and other aspects of community living.

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