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MSC given thumbs up by advisers (HL)

Badrul Hisham Mahzan; Rashid Yusof
KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - International advisers to the Multimedia Super Corridor today expressed confidence in the Malaysian economy and renewed their endorsement of the MSC.

They said they were very impressed with the facilities at the MSC, the local capabilities, and enthusiasm and flexibility of the parties involved.

Speaking at a joint Press conference with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad after the second meeting of the International Advisory Panel, the advisers said the high attendance at a time of economic problems is proof of their confidence.

Bob Bishop of Silicon Graphics World Trade Corporation said:

"The MSC can be the catalyst to pull Malaysia and, possibly the region, out of the economic problems."

Referring to the problems, Jim Manzi, a private technology investor, said "Malaysia is a very different story".

A few of the advisers detailed their investments in the MSC, like Lucent Technologies Inc's Ben J.M. Verwaayen, who said the company's commitment was worth "far above US\$100 million (about RM370 million)".

Led by Dr Mahathir, the advisers started the day at 8am in the palm-ringed Cyberjaya Transit Office Complex.

Emerging afterwards, Dr Mahathir whose commitment and knowledge of Information Technology won all-round praise, said the discussions had been mutually beneficial.

He said that with work a year ahead of schedule, "there is really no reason" why the MSC should be postponed.

"If there is an impact at all, it has been accelerated."

The advisers also raised concern over restrictions, the need for a safety net for MSC companies which might fail, and availability of knowledge workers.

In this respect, some of the advisers said they were impressed with the capabilities of local companies. Alex Hass of Siemens Nixdorf Information Systems, said software developed by Malaysians were being sold to European customers.

Hass said he travelled here by land from Bangkok "to get the feel" on whether the MSC could be integrated into the Malaysian economy, and came away convinced that it could.

The advisers also saw a deepening of the entrepreneurship culture in the country, and a well-planned and flexible programme for the MSC, and expressed their admiration for the leadership's commitment to IT.

On this, Alex Sozonoff, vice-president and general manager of marketing and operations of Hewlett-Packard Company, said, "I have real admiration for Dr Mahathir .. I can't think of any other statesman with such energy and passion."

The members were briefed on the progress of the MSC by Multimedia Development Corporation's executive chairman Tan Sri Dr Othman Yeop Abdullah.

Four companies which had done well in the field of multimedia also made presentations to the advisers.

The IAP members also made two suggestions - the need for consistency in government policy and tolerance for failure when companies do not do well.

The first meeting of the IAP was held at Stanford University in

California in January last year.

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