

13 FEB 1998

Panel-Success

MSC WILL BE SUCCESSFUL, SAY MULTIMEDIA INDUSTRY LEADERS

By: E.Sivabalan

CYBERJAYA, Feb 13 (Bernama) -- Despite the absence of Microsoft's Bill Gates, IBM's Louis Gerstner and Scott McNealy of Sun Microsystems, the second International Advisory Panel of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) ended here today with renewed confidence, commitment, and most of all, more investment pledges.

All 13 of the 44-member IAP who attended the two-day meeting agreed, after seeing for themselves the facts and figures, that the MSC will be a successful project despite the economic battering that has hit many Asian projects in recent months.

Another 12 participants of the meeting, who represented IAP members who could not attend, also gave the greenlight to Malaysia to carry on with the project.

They not only came out in full support of the MSC but also produced several concrete proposals and recommendations aimed at ensuring the success of the MSC, a brainchild of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The IAP, comprising multimedia industry leaders and gurus, was formed to advise the government on the MSC, a 750 sq km area south of Kuala Lumpur, designated as a hub for the development of multimedia products and services.

The MSC is located between the Kuala Lumpur City Centre and the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang.

The inaugural IAP meeting was held on Jan 16 last year at Stanford University, California which saw more than 20 IT companies, many of them rivals, involved in a discussion on how to create an ideal multimedia environment.

To-date, the government has given MSC status accreditation to 110 companies out of which 78 are already in operation. And since April last year, the government through the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC) which is overseeing the implementation of the MSC project, received 178 applications for MSC status.

And the MSC continues to see international endorsements.

Only two weeks ago, Motorola Inc. announced a US\$11 million (US\$1=RM4) investment over the next two years in the MSC while Japan's NTT last week detailed its plans for a previously announced US\$10 million investment.

Microsoft is expected to announce its plans for the MSC during Gates' visit to Malaysia next month.

Gary Tooker, chairman of Motorola Inc, said the participants were pleased with the concrete progress made so far by Dr Mahathir and his team.

Jim Manzi, a private investor in technology, said the progress made by the MSC in the last eight months has been "remarkable and quite surprising".

"Malaysia is a very different story than other countries in this region," he said.

Expressing similar sentiment was Siemens AG executive vice-president Axel Hass who said the company decided to go for additional investment because it was impressed with the project.

He said he was very optimistic that "we are investing in the right place."

In many ways, the recent economic turmoil has made the MSC even more

attractive than before.

The depreciation of the ringgit against the US dollar and many European currencies has meant that the investment required by multinationals in the MSC was lower.

According to a senior MDC official, the Cyberjaya meeting reviewed the progress of the MSC to see if the project was proceeding in the right direction.

"It is progressing well and ahead of schedule," he said.

The participants also discussed several aspects of its development such as human resource, physical infrastructure, environment and research and development culture.

They also had a network session with several Cabinet ministers, senior government officials and top Malaysian corporate leaders.

--BERNAMA

ES sk