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MDC Access to help SMEs in IT, multimedia sectors

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MULTIMEDIA Development Corp Sdn Bhd (MDC) yesterday announced it has set up a new division with the aim of assisting local small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the information technology (IT) and multimedia sectors.

"Called MDC Advisory and Consulting Centre for Enterprises (MDC Access), its role is to provide specialised consultation and support to local SMEs that are keen to participate and grow within the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC)," MDC senior manager (client services) Sarina Karim told a news conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

"Other services provided by the centre include smart partnership programmes, business referrals and business leads, a comprehensive database on local and foreign IT and multimedia companies, linkage to funding sources, advice on technology and counsel on obtaining MSC status," she said.

"We believe there are close to 1,000 IT and multimedia companies in the country to date," she added.

Sarina, who is also head of MDC Access, said the centre will be officially launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on July 7.

"In the meantime, we have already started providing services to IT and multimedia SMEs and are well on our way towards launching our first-ever nationwide roadshow this month," she said.

Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon will kick off the first session of the MSC Nationwide Conference 1998 on May 25 in Penang.

After Penang, she added, MDC Access will organise another conference in Kuala Lumpur on June 9 and in Johor Baru on June 23.

"We have also set the dates for conferences to be held in Kuantan, Kuching, Kuala Terengganu, Alor Setar, Kota Baru, Ipoh, Kota Kinabalu and Malacca," she said.

Sarina said the MSC Nationwide Conference 1998 is aimed at increasing awareness of the benefits and opportunities available in the MSC.

"The conference will provide an insight into the current and future development of the MSC.

"We will also provide a perspective of the funding options available to SMEs and start-up companies," she said, adding that the MDC has invited several organisations which can assist in funding.

The organisations include Mayban Ventures Sdn Bhd, Rashid Hussain Asset Management Sdn Bhd, DTA Capital Partners, Aseambankers Malaysia Bhd, Commerce International Merchant Bankers Bhd, Arab Malaysian Merchant Bank Bhd and Arthur Andersen.

"Presentations by venture capitalists who are on the lookout for potential investee companies will be included in the conference agenda," Sarina said.

MDC director (client services) Dr Muhammad Ghazie Ismail, who was present at the press conference, said to date, MDC has received a total of 216 applications from IT and multimedia companies seeking MSC status.

"Of this total, 132 applications have been approved, 53 are being processed, 24 are 'borderline' cases and seven have been rejected," he said.

He added that of the 132 companies accorded MSC status, 52 comprise local companies, 27 are joint-ventures with Malaysian shareholders, while

the rest are foreign companies.

Muhammad Ghazie also said that the MDC encourages companies whose applications have been rejected to re-apply. He added though that "they can only do so after a lapse of six months".

On the RM100-million Fund for the MSC Research and Development Grant Scheme that was launched by the Government in October last year, he said no amount has been disbursed as yet.

Asked whether the MDC is facing problems disbursing the fund, he replied, "No problems. It is just a matter of receiving the applications and reviewing them."

The fund, under the administration of the MDC, is designed to help local or joint venture companies with at least 51 per cent local equity, develop multimedia technologies and applications that will contribute to the overall development of the MSC.

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