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Nokia expects to receive MSC status soon

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NOKIA expects to be awarded the MSC (Multimedia Super Corridor) status soon, its group president and chief executive officer Jorma Ollila said.

With the status, he said Nokia will be allowed to do research and development (R and D) for the future generation of mobile phone sets that provide Internet access.

Ollila said that Nokia submitted its application for MSC status yesterday.

"We are looking forward to working in the MSC. Nokia are leaders in the area of wireless multimedia concept and wireless data concept.

"We look forward to establishing our operations in Malaysia as a centre for software service package. This is an important extension of R and D done in Europe, US and other parts of Asia," Ollila told reporters after a meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

As at March 5 1998, there are 113 companies which have been awarded the MSC status. The Multimedia Development Corp (MDC) is the governing body for the MSC, and is responsible for the granting of the MSC status to companies.

Criteria for MSC status include the requirement for an applicant to be a provider or heavy user of multimedia products and services, employ a substantial number of knowledge workers, and conduct and support research and development activities.

Companies and institutions accorded MSC status enjoy various financial and non-financial incentives.

Those located in the designated cyber cities will get the full benefits as stipulated in the Government's 10-point Bill of Guarantees including freedom of ownership and preference for tenders for key MSC infrastructure projects.

Ollila added that Nokia's research on wireless multimedia is basically combining capabilities of the wireless (mobile phones) and the Internet.

"We are combining the mobile handsets with the capability of Internet which is today confined to the desktop. This way, we can come up with a personal and business multimedia application," he added.

Although Nokia has its Communicator (mobile phone cum personal computer), Ollila said that the Communicator is the first step towards this future application.

"The Communicator with the current GSM bandwidth and the bit-rate of 9.6 kilobits per second is not speedy enough. We need something which combines mobile phone capability with moving video and high-speed Internet access," he said.

Ollila said that his discussion with Dr Mahathir included matters on the Malaysian economy and Nokia's role in developing the telecommunications infrastructure and business in Malaysia.

"We also talked about the impact of the currency turmoil in South-East Asia. It was encouraging to hear from Dr Mahathir on how Malaysia is adjusting to the economic situation.

"From Nokia's point, we confirmed that we are committed to the Malaysian market. We have done very well moving ahead.

"In Malaysia, we have built our long-term commitment on our technological capabilities, with both R and D, technical support and customer services, as well as manufacturing through our joint-venture

partner Sapura," Ollila said.

When asked about monetary investments in Malaysia, Ollila declined to comment, only saying that Nokia is not looking at an investment figure.

"We have to-date made major investments to our technological competence in Malaysia. We will be increasing that steadily in the years to come," he said, adding that Nokia has some 250 people working for them in Malaysia and expects the figure to increase steadily in the future.

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