

14/02/1998

Promise of more investment in MSC (HL)

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CYBERJAYA, Fri. - Pledging support for the Multimedia Super Corridor, top IT companies said today they would invest more and provide scientists to the Multimedia University.

They also proposed the use of volunteer engineers to help connect all Malaysian schools to the Internet, as was done in the US.

These were among specific matters raised at the second meeting of the MSC International Advisory Panel which ended today. The advisers held separate discussions with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and several Cabinet Ministers.

Siemens Nixdorf Information Systems vice-president Axel Hass said the company which had already invested RM2.5 billion in Malaysia in such areas as IT and communications, would invest a further RM1 billion in the next three years, including in the MSC.

"We conveyed this to the Prime Minister," said Hass who maintained that its investments outside MSC were also pertinent, because while the MSC is a test-bed for multimedia, "real life" happened outside the 750 sq km area.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said the IT experts saw MSC as an opportunity for new investments in manufacturing, systems development and software designing for local and international markets.

Telecommunications company Lucent Technologies Inc, among the 110 companies accorded MSC status, said apart from making the MSC its regional headquarters, it would also assign scientists from its Bell Labs in the US to teach at the MMU and Universiti Telekom Malaysia.

"I told the Prime Minister we are anxious to get going," Lucent Technologies executive vice-president Ben J.M. Verwayeen said after meeting Dr Mahathir.

Having seen the facilities and listened to the Malaysian leaders, the companies said they were more keen to help make MSC a reality.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Leo Moggie and Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng also attended the discussions.

Najib said a few IT companies proposed the wiring up of schools to the Internet, and that he had asked for a package suitable for Malaysia.

Dr John Gage, chief scientist of Sun Microsystems Inc, one of those who spoke to Najib, said its International NetDay director, Alissa Chiaravanond, would visit Malaysia next month to see if volunteers could be used, as in the US, for the project.

"What we did was to ask every engineer in California and then in the whole of the United States to go out to his or her children's school, take a ladder and some 'category 5' cables and wire up the schools.

"On one Saturday in California, 100,000 volunteers wired up 4,000 schools," he said.

Rafidah said Acer Group's chairman, CEO and co-founder Dr Stan Shih told her of his plans to provide venture capital for IT business.

Today, Dr Mahathir also led the advisers to plant eugenea oleanda trees at the lawn of the Cyberview Lodge, naming it the IAP Avenue.

Dr Mahathir then joined the Ministers and advisers for a networking session before closing the meeting.

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