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Collective thumbs up to MSC (HL)

Sarban Singh; Shareem Amry; Azrani Rustam

CYBERJAYA, Fri. - The Multimedia Super Corridor is positioned well ahead of similar hubs such as Singapore's Singapore ONE and Hong Kong's Cyberport, the International Advisory Panel members said today.

Extolling the virtues which give the MSC a keen competitive edge, the members said Malaysia had the advantage of a multi-lingual climate, sound plans for long-term human resources development, a strong political leadership and consistency of vision.

"It's absolutely remarkable what's been achieved here," said British Telecom's chief executive Sir Peter Bonfield. "You're a long way in front and the thing now is you need to keep it that way."

Speaking at a joint Press conference at the Prime Minister's Department here, the panel members unanimously gave a collective thumbs-up to the project, and said Malaysians should be proud of what had been achieved so far.

"Compared to Hong Kong and Singapore, what you have here is quality of life and the development of human resources in the long term," Acer Incorporated chairman and chief executive officer Datuk Dr Stan Shih said.

When asked about the competition the MSC faced from Hong Kong and Singapore, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said it was more important to concentrate on building partnerships with these hubs.

"The industry is growing at a rapid pace and no one has a monopoly. There will be room for everyone and we are sure that interaction would be beneficial to all of us," Dr Mahathir said.

Singapore ONE is a national initiative to deliver a new level of interactive, multimedia applications and services to homes, businesses and schools throughout Singapore.

Hong Kong's Cyberport, to be built in Telegraphy Bay in Pokfulam, is a US\$1.68 billion (RM6.38 billion) project based around an advanced fibre optic telecommunications infrastructure with high-speed links to the rest of the world.

But panel members agreed that the MSC project, which has progressed ahead of schedule despite an economic downturn, was still able to call itself the leader of the pack.

Ben Verwaayen, chief operating officer of Lucent Technologies said the MSC was a smart project because it was more than just about infrastructure.

"You also have very important elements such as education and venture capital, and these have merged to bring up a new breed of start-up companies. That distinguishes it from any other projects I've seen," he said.

It was also pointed out that the presence of the panel members, who represent some of the biggest IT-related companies in the world, was a thumping endorsement of the MSC's worth.

"No country in the world, not the United States, not Japan, Germany or England - has a group like this," said Sun Microsystems' chief scientist John Gage.

"You have the leaders of some of the most advanced companies giving advice and the benefit of their business skepticism."

Some of the corporate chiefs hinted that their enthusiasm for the project would result in them investing in the MSC in the future.

"Ten years ago, Acer took advantage of the infrastructure in Penang. And

now we will take advantage of the infrastructure in the MSC," Shih said.

NEC Corporation's board of directors senior member Datuk Dr Tadahiro Sekimoto said NEC would establish a research and development centre in the corridor to take part in its activities.

Compaq Computer Corporation's regional managing director Paul Blinkhorn also said the company was "excited" by what it had witnessed so far, and would "want to be part of the future action."

Referring to plans to establish an entertainment village, which would, among other things, house a studio that could do post-production effects for movies, the Motion Picture Association's Asia Pacific senior vice president Michael Connors said Hollywood would soon be knocking on Malaysia's door.

"This is the perfect time to build the entertainment village because there is a transition in our industry. We are still looking for the same magic in movies, but the delivery of that magic is changing with advances in technology," said Connors.

"You will be seeing a lot of our members here." Referring to areas which the MSC must focus on to ensure ultimate success, IAP members said with the proper infrastructure now in place, digital content and effective marketing should be emphasised.

"It's time now to create content production, which will determine the image of the MSC in the long-term," said Madge Networks Ltd's chairman and CEO Robert Madge.

"Marketing must also go to the people, so that the name `Cyberjaya' becomes like `Silicon Valley' or `Hollywood'," he added.

Present at the Press conference were 12 IAP members and 13 observers and representatives. The IAP members were Shih, Bonfield, Cutler & Company director Dr Terry Cutler, Fujitsu Limited chairman Tadashi Sekizawa, Hewlett Packard chairman, president and CEO Datuk Lewis Platt, LG Chemicals & LG Electronics chairman Bon-Moo Koo, Verwaayen, Madge, Sekimoto, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation president Jun-Ichiro Miyazu, Peking University director Prof Wang Xuan and Bishop.

The representatives and observers were Alcatel CIT chairman and CEO Manuel Gordillo, Compaq Computer Corporation regional marketing director Paul Blinkhorn, Electronic Data Services corporate senior vice president Edward Yang, Intel Corporation technology and manufacturing group vice president David Marsing, Lotus Corp (IBM) Asia Pacific vice president Raphael Tan, Microsoft Asia vice president Pieter Knook, Connors, Motorola Asia Pacific executive vice president and president C.D. Tam, Nokia Corporation Southeast Asia Pacific senior vice president Kari Ahola, Oracle Asia Pacific senior vice president Derek Williams, Reuters Asia managing directory Jeremy Penn, Siemens AG information and broadband sales president Wolfgang Essig and Gage.

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