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Investors' mood on the upbeat

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CYBERJAYA, Sat. - The mood is definitely upbeat among those who have thrown in their lot with the Multimedia Super Corridor.

Members of the MSC's International Advisory Panel are planning more investments in the area.

Acer Corporation chairman, chief executive and co-founder Datuk Dr Stan Shih said the company would be setting up a MSC-status company which will specialise in digital service technical research and manufacturing.

The scope of the company's activities will, among others, focus on entertainment, education and e-commerce.

The company, which will be set up by the end of the year, will be aligned to the activities of other MSC-status companies in the development of software and hardware for digital services.

The key issue to the setting up of the company will be the availability of human resources.

"If we can recruit the technical people, we can start immediately," Shih said.

He also announced the setting up of a venture capital management company for the MSC in which Acer will provide up to 50 per cent of the fund.

"The fund will be in the region of between RM10 million and RM20 million to start with and we hope local companies will also be involved," he said after meeting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Acer is looking towards having its operations in the MSC as a "competence centre" for the group.

"There is no reason why we should duplicate our operations in Taiwan (Acer's headquarters). In some areas, the MSC-developed technology should be shared in the region."

On the future of the MSC, Shih said it was still "very early days" and said that significant results of the project could only be seen in the next 10 years.

"I will be back next year," said EDS Corporation corporate vice-president and president, Asia Pacific, Edward V. Yang.

Meanwhile, Motorola's Asia Pacific executive vice president and president C.D. Tam said he had suggested to Dr Mahathir to target younger students by opening primary schools within the corridor.

"Opening the Multimedia University was a good step and it addresses one facet of the education issue. But establishing primary schools is also important because you need to start them early, plus it would bring families into the corridor," he said.

Tam also said that any competition to the MSC as an IT hub would not come from Hong Kong's Cyberport or Singapore's Singapore ONE, but from India.

"They have a wealth of software engineers and expertise, but the difference is the Indian Government has not set up any infrastructure. With the MSC, you have."

Director and head of Australian consulting firm Cutler and Company Terry Cutler said the members were very "excited" with the potential of the MSC in the coming year.

"We are going to play an active role in trying some of the key initiatives happen," he said.

He also applauded Malaysia's focus on education in trying to find competent technical workers and said the setting up of the Multimedia

University would act as a "springboard" for further human resource development.

With regard to publicising the MSC, Cutler said there had been some bad reports about the MSC in the foreign media and the members agreed to speak to their local media to help them understand the project.

Peking University's director of the Institute of Computer Science and Technology Prof Wang Xuan said he had proposed several new initiatives for the MSC; including the development of indigenous education multimedia application, animation production and fingerprinting identification technology to Dr Mahathir.

One of the the centre's commercial venture, PUC Founder (MSC) Sdn Bhd, will set up a research and development centre at Cyberjaya in the near future.

Xuan said the clean environment at Cyberjaya could attract many talented young people from mainland China to come and work here.

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