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MSC-ORACLE

DEVELOPING SKILLED-SOFTWARE RESOURCES BIGGEST CHALLENGE TO MSC

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

NEW ORLEANS, Louisiana, Feb 23 (Bernama) -- The biggest challenge facing the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) is to develop "skilled-software" resources so that the information technology (IT) industry in Malaysia can be taken to a significantly higher plane, an official of Oracle Corporation said.

Derek Williams, the executive vice-president for Asia-Pacific, said that Malaysia, which was already exporting some software developed in the MSC, needed to take this endeavour further to complement countries such as India.

He said that although India along with some regional economies were prominent in software technology, the region as a whole undoubtedly lacked software skills and consequently lagged behind the United States and Europe in the area.

"The lack of skilled software resources is the biggest impediment to the wholesome development of the IT industry in the region," Williams said when asked by Malaysian journalists on the challenges facing the MSC.

The development of the MSC, measuring 15km wide and 50km long from the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) down south to the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), was spearheaded by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, to serve as a regional hub for the development of local software products.

With the rapid growth of the Internet, the MSC which is now into its seventh year would facilitate the advancement of the knowledge-based economy as well as enable interaction between software developers from all over the world.

Oracle Corp's chief executive officer, Larry J. Ellison, is a member of the Investment Advisory Panel (IAP) for the MSC which just concluded its latest board meeting in September.

Williams usually represents Ellison at the IAP meetings.

Williams said that it was this need to develop software skills which prompted Oracle, which is based in Redwood, California, to provide support for academic activities in related areas of development in Malaysia.

To this end, the company has invested in teaching as well as software and the sponsorship of Universiti Tun Abdul Razak, Sunway College and Binary College, which is part of the Oracle Academic Initiative.

"We must ensure that Malaysia is developing the next generation of software people," he said.

As for the MSC itself, he said it really suffered with the recession as it lost some of the impetus during the 1997/98 economic meltdown.

"However, right now, there is good progress in the MSC and organisations are moving into the corridor as we (Oracle) are," said Williams.

He said that some of the pilot projects in the MSC are taking off and Oracle is involved in many of these projects.

As far as Oracle is concerned, "we do a lot of our telecommunications in the MSC for Asia-Pacific which is in line with other countries developing their IT initiatives," he said.

"I think the MSC is very important to Malaysia in terms of developing IT and Oracle supports it totally."

Asked about the IAP meetings, Williams said: "I have been to every single board meeting that's been held by the Prime Minister and I have had

one-on-ones with him regularly and we talk about the development of the IT industry in Malaysia and how we can help local companies go global."

"The Prime Minister is always very interested in developing IT in Malaysia and we talked about B2B (business-to-business) exchanges the last time I was there."

Some of the B2B exchanges using Oracle's software platform are already operating in Malaysia and Dr Mahathir was interested in them as well, he said.

"The sort of work that we are doing is not just about vertical or horizontal exchanges, its about integrating them together to prepare the marketplace and to do business under a collaborative culture," he added. --

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