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MICROSOFT-R&D
MICROSOFT INVESTS RM19 BLN IN R&D

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 11 (Bernama) -- Microsoft Corporation is committed to spending more than US$5.0 billion (RM19 billion) on research and development (R&D) during its current financial year to develop advanced technologies and network platforms for critical business applications.

"Our focus on product development is unquestionable: that is the reason we are investing such an amount," said Microsoft's enterprise and partner group (EPG) executive vice president, Charles Stevens, at a media briefing here today.

On Microsoft's "enterprise business" (as the operation is called within the corporation), Stevens said that it remained strong and grew by 30 percent in sales last year despite the challenging economic situation.

"I am not going to give any forecast to you but we hope to grow by a bigger margin (in terms of sales) this year," he added.

Stevens, who is in Malaysia for the Microsoft Asia Fusion 2001 conference which kicked off today, said that Microsoft was committed to working with its industry partners in every market in which it operates, to build skills and knowledge.

This would enable information technology (IT) companies and software developers to build strategic business solutions for their joint customers, he added.

"We cannot be successful without partnerships: that is why we need to be close to our partners to explain our strategies to them (enterprise customers and partners) and getting their feedback as well," said Stevens.

He added that Microsoft's three-pronged strategy to engage its industry and enterprise partners had been tried and proven in many markets around the world to increase business opportunities for the company as well as its enterprise partners.

He said that the two-day conference (hosted in Malaysia for the first time this year) has gathered 750 Microsoft enterprise partners, including Microsoft Certified Solution Providers, Global Partners, Independent Software Vendor, Applications Service providers and Resellers across the Asian region.

Stevens also reiterated Microsoft's corporate vision in which it has committed itself to help develop Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), as was personally conveyed to the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last month by Microsoft vice-president Michael Rawding.

"Microsoft has a special relationship with Malaysia, and (has a) special connection between its chairman Bill Gates and the Prime Minister here as they've met frequently over the years, and Microsoft is really a strong supporter of Malaysia's vision to become a great technology centre," he added.

Therefore, he said, the software development company is making "a big investment and commitment" to the MSC.

Meanwhile, Microsoft (M) Sdn Bhd has said that RM22 million was being spent over the next 12 months to train local software developers to become familiar with (the XML programming language) as well as to provide "IT connectivity" to the country's orphanages.

The XML is the new lingua franca of software and web services which is designed for data exchange.

Microsoft Malaysia's managing director Butt Wai Choon said that the company's XML Web Services centre in Cyberjaya provides an ideal facility

for testing software applications.

"A large chunk of it (the investment) is to train as many as 9,000 IT professionals by July 2002, of which we aim to train 3,000 at the XML Web Services Centre," he said.

He said that part of the investment goes to orphanages of which it had given to 35 orphanages in Klang Valley so far.

"For the orphanages' programme we are teaming up with the Lions Club of Cyber Care, our target is to cater for 117 orphanages," he added.

He said that Microsoft also donates the proceeds from the software piracy settlements to a fund for the orphanages. -- BERNAMA

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