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MSC-PRAISES  
PANEL MEMBERS HEAP PRAISES ON MALAYSIA'S MSC

By: Muin Abdul Majid

CYBERJAYA, Sept 4 (Bernama) - Members of the Multimedia Super Corridor International Advisory Panel meeting here have expressed admiration over Malaysia's handling of the (MSC) project so far despite having to face various problems such as the global economic slowdown and the recent SARS epidemic.

Since its launching in 1996 by Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the number of MSC-status companies now stands at 923, 59 of which are world-class companies.

For the last seven years, apart from attracting a core group of world-class companies into the MSC, Malaysia has launched seven Flagship Applications, put in place a world-leading framework of cyberlaws and established Cyberjaya and Putrajaya as world-leading intelligent cities.

In the second phase (2003 to 2010), the MSC will be linked to other global cybercities, create a web of corridors and will also set global standards in flagship applications and harmonise global framework of cyberlaws.

"Like all transitions there are some risks. But Phase 1 has been highly successful. We are very, very pleased with it," said Silicon Graphics Inc chairman and chief executive officer, Bob Bishop.

Met by reporters on the sidelines of the seventh MSC-IAP talks being attended by 31 panel members and representatives today, he said the success of Phase 1, among other things, was reflected in the number of companies involved in the MSC and the 18,000 jobs created thus far.

"And the sales and exports component of the MSC is higher than expected. And all of these happened in spite of the currency crisis of 1997, the reduction in the global economy and the recent SARS epidemic," he said.

In the 4th MSC Annual Impact Survey conducted in May 2003, total expenditure of MSC-status companies is reported to be worth more than RM3.61 billion in 2002. The total spending is projected to further increase by 23 percent in 2003.

As a result, total sales is expected to jump from RM5.83 billion in 2003 to RM7.68 billion in 2004.

A projected 17 percent of products and services created within the MSC will be transcending geographical boundaries, finding themselves on the export market. By the end of 2003, export sales will make up RM1.04 billion of the projected total sales.

Bishop said: "I don't think the world has realized how successful Phase 1 is. In fact we have exceeded the goals that we have established for Phase 1. And considering all those obstacles that Malaysia has gone through, I can consider Phase 1 to be a true victory."

He said despite 18,000 jobs created, there were some 3,000 vacancies, and this was good for Malaysian students and workers wishing to be associated with the MSC.

Bishop said besides equipping its manpower with higher education, Malaysia must ensure that they possess the ability to create innovation, entrepreneurial and risk-taking skills as well as marketing acumen.

"They must also have a global perspective for the information economy is a global economy, not only a local economy. So the question is how do you train people in all these dimensions," he added.

Meanwhile, ID Track president, Robert Madge said the MSC had so much

momentum and commitment from so many companies.

"The Phase 1 has been very successful. I think in most aspects it has been much more successful than anyone expected, and how it has been able to carry on despite the problems, particularly the financial crisis of four years ago," he said.

He said with Phase 2, things should be more interesting since the project had started to become more ambitious.

Madge also said that the impending leadership change would have little impact on the MSC.

Stanford University's Prof William F. Miller heaped similar praises on the development of the MSC, whose progress, he described, as faster than expected.

He said efforts should be made to give more publicity to the MSC project so that other countries were aware of it.

Miller also said that Malaysia should continue with its endeavour to produce a skilled and talented manpower. -- BERNAMA

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