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Call to beef up home-grown software

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CYBERJAYA, Fri. - As the Multimedia Super Corridor embarks on its second phase of growth, its International Advisory Panel members are urging Malaysia to beef up development of homegrown software and knowledge workers.

The project's second phase from 2003 to 2010 will see it link up with other global cybercities and expand its role in setting global standards in technology applications and cyberlaws.

At a Press conference today, panel members said the MSC had established strong foundations in software and hardware infrastructure, and had managed to create a conducive environment for technology entrepreneurs.

Oracle Corporation's executive vice president for its Asia Pacific Division Prof Derek Williams said the development and sale of worldclass software would be an important indicator of the MSC's success.

"Software exports are very important. You must see world-class software coming out of the MSC going into the international market, and the money returning to Malaysia."

He said Oracle was working with local software companies, one of which had successfully developed an airport management system that had been sold to 12 airports worldwide.

Acer Group chairman and chief executive officer Datuk Dr Stan Shih said Malaysia, which had established itself in manufacturing, now had to develop value-added services to stay competitive.

"Manufacturing is a necessary foundation of economic development, but in the future, you need more value-added services.

"With the possible exception of China, Asia's next growth engine will be the service industry, especially technology-based," Shih said.

To a question on whether panel members had recommended other companies to relocate their operations to the MSC, Shih said he expected to see Taiwanese companies moving here in about two years' time.

"Currently, Taiwanese companies are mainly in manufacturing. We will need the Malaysian market and Malaysia should also partner us. Both our markets alone are too small to stay competitive. We should share our solutions as that is our future."

New IAP member Ramalinga Raju, chairman of Satyam Computer Services Ltd, said 65 per cent of the world economy was based on services and congratulated Malaysia for its foresight in planning the MSC to compete in this sector.

Technology had also enabled most services to be delivered virtually around the world, turning service providers into global players.

"That Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad should have visualised this many years ago, and that you now have good software and physical infrastructure and a clear understanding of what you can achieve, this is creditable.

"The MSC is well-placed and should go down in history as a well-thought out and visionary project," Ramalinga added.

Other IAP members, many of whom have attended the annual meeting since its inception, commented on the MSC's progress.

Silicon Graphics Inc chairman Bob Bishop said he noticed the increased "passion and innovation" of local scientists.

Stanford University's Prof William F. Miller said Malaysians were now handling more sophisticated technology and applications.

Siemens Information and Communication Network group executive board member Anton Hendrik Schaaf said the company's global operations here was proof that the MSC had a conducive environment for knowledge workers.

DHL Systems Ltd global chief information officer Stephen McGuckin said the company's regional office here had grown to a 600 strong-workforce.

Sun Microsystems chief researcher and science director Dr John Gage commended Dr Mahathir for his vision and ability to bring so many captains of the IT industry together.

"I think all of us in the IAP can say that years of dreaming have turned into something real. Why do we all keep coming (to IAP meetings)? It's very difficult to get top business executives to go to meetings."