IT world coming to KL

| BY KARAMJIT SINGH |

Seven years in the making, the 16th World Congress of Information Technology (WCIT) finally opens in Kuala Lumpur on May 18. Having won the right to hold this prestigious event, often dubbed the Olympics of IT, Malaysia is going all out to ensure it will be remembered as the best organised world congress ever.

In conjunction with the congress, there will be plenary sessions, organised networking, an exhibition and leisure, cultural and entertainment activities. Even go-kart races will be held at Sepang.

Also on the programme is a charity auction of gaming product X-BOX 360 (limited edition) signed by Bill Gates, who will be making a special appearance via holographic technology.

WCIT is the flagship event of the World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA), a consortium of 73 international ICT organisations whose members comprise more than 90% of the global IT market. The value of this market in 2009 is expected to cross US$3.9 trillion (about RM12.4 trillion).

Already from a sponsorship point of view, the event has raised more money than it did in Texas in 2006. According to Dan Khoo, CEO of WCIT 2008 Sdn Bhd, almost US$6 million has been raised from WCIT KL. It is a highly impressive number and a credit to the government, both for its initial start-up contribution of RM2 million and for the strong support it gave Multimedia Development Corp (MDeC). MDeC, together with the Association of the Computer and Multimedia Industry, Malaysia (Pikom), is playing host.

According to Khoo, WCIT will be used to attract a whole series of other events to be held simultaneously in the city. About 50,000 participants comprising 8,000 delegates and 42,000 expo visitors are expected to arrive (see table for full schedule).

These events include the United Nations Global Alliance on ICT and Development (UN-GAID), the Commonwealth Telecommunication Organisation (CTO) e-government conference, the International Advisory Panel meeting for MSC Malaysia, Mobile Monday Global Summit (see article on Page 3), a grid computing conference organised by Mimos, the World Cyber Security Summit and seven other related events.

"Holding so many events around WCIT has never been done before; we wanted to broaden its appeal and attractiveness," says Khoo. Besides, the event in Malaysia will have a strong policymaking slant.

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The schedule for WCIT 2008 and related events

Component	Wed May 14	Thurs May 15	Fri May 16	Sat * May 17	Sun May 18	Mon ** May 19	Tues May 20	Wed May 21	Thurs May 22	Fri May 23	Sat May 24
1. WCIT 2008					▨	▨	▨	▨			
2. CTO e-Gov					▨	▨	▥				
3. UN GAID					▨	▥					
4. 11th IAP			▥	▥							
5. World CyberSecurity Summit							▨	▨	▨	▨	
i. DNS Seminar & Meeting							▨				
ii. ATPLD Training & BoD Mtg									▨	▨	
iii. INFOSEC.my									▨	▨	
iv. IMPACT Ministerial Summit									▨		
6. MITPM 2008	▨	▨									
7. WITSA AGM											
8. ASOCIO Plenary Meeting											▨
9. Mobile Monday Global Summit						▨					
10. Grid Computing Conference			▨	▨							
11. IJMA3 Plenary Meeting							▨				
12. Pikom PC Fair Int'l							▨	▨	▨	▨	▨
13. CDC Strategic Alliances											
14. Unesco STI										▨	▨
15. Global Innovation Summit											

Vertical labels in table: Welcome Reception; Opening Ceremony & Opening Group Press Conference; Closing Group Press Conference

- ▨ Related events' schedule
- ▨ Core events' schedule
- ▧ Common programmes proposed to be hosted by Malaysian government

Note:
- Date for new events TBC later by respective event organisers
- Events' schedule is subject to change without prior notice
- * Saturday, May 17, 2008 is World Telecommunications Day
- ** Monday, May 19, 2008 is Wesak Day

MDeC CEO Datuk Badlisham Ghazali receiving the symbolic handover and goodluck handshake for WCIT 2008 at the closing ceremony of the event in Austin, Texas, in 2006

Chance to showcase to global audience

According to Khoo, the move to get the backing of policymakers was based on feedback from the organisers of WCIT Texas. "When we asked them for some of their challenges, the lack of policymakers from the government was cited as a major missing component in the success of the event," he says.

Fortunately for Malaysia, government support has always been a major plus point in global events organised here. For instance, former Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Jamaludin Jarjis went to Davos, Switzerland, to promote WCIT Malaysia during the World Economic Forum in January. MDeC CEO Datuk Badlisham Ghazali, who was with him then, also said Malaysia's strategic location at the crossroads between East

and West makes it an ideal gateway to Asia, offering global businesses "a springboard to the lucrative Asian markets of China, India and Southeast Asia".

"Indeed, that is the position Malaysia has taken and aims to hammer home during the gathering of these smart, powerful and influential people at (WCIT) Malaysia," says Khoo.

Delegates will also have the chance to visit other states that may want to show their various IT and biotech initiatives to attract investments. Of course, a trip to Cyberjaya is in the itinerary. However, no event has been planned in Cyberjaya. Khoo says this is because they want to keep all the activities centred around the various venues in KL. "It is for the convenience of the delegates," he adds.

One new feature in WCIT Malaysia is the creation of a chief information officer panel to enable vendors to hear from key buyers of technology their thoughts and challenges.

A host of eminent global personalities have been lined up as speakers and panellists, including Dr J Craig Venter, founder and president of the J. Craig Venter Institute and the J. Craig Venter Science Foundation; Intel's Dr Craig Barrett; Dr Robert Bishop, chairman of the Blue Brain Project; Dr Hamadoun Toure, secterary-general of the International Telecommunication Union; Dr Robert Atkinson of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, and chief information officers Robert Carter of FedEx and Douglas Merrill of Google.

Among the Malaysian CEOs who will share the stage with their global counterparts are Ganesh Kumar of MOL Portal, Wei Chuan Beng of REDtone and Tan Sri Lim Kok Wing.

For Malaysian companies, the congress will provide an unparalled opportunity to showcase themselves to a global audience. With CNBC as media partner, a wide audience is assured.

Those interested in participating can obtain information at www.WCIT2008.org or email registration@wcit2008.org.   🄴

Comments: feedback@bizedge.com

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— Badlisham