

BUSINESS

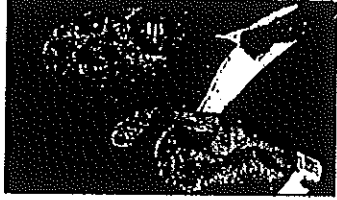
Malaysia pursues higher high tech Asian nation courts Silicon Valley to help create a 'brain complex'

BY MIKE LANGBERG
Mercury News Staff Writer

Malaysia is already a major technology manufacturing center, but the Asian nation also wants a share of the brain work — prompting Malaysia's prime minister to call a summit meeting of Silicon Valley executives Thursday at Stanford University.

Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohamad, head of the Malaysian government since 1981, is the driving force behind a \$40 billion project called the Multimedia Super Corridor, a proposed complex of research centers, universities, corporate offices and government ministries planned to cover an area 30 miles by 9 miles near the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur.

Mahathir, a 71-year-old former physician, is looking for technology companies from around the world to support the Super Corridor, and he drew an impressive turnout of some of Silicon Valley's top executives for a day-long meeting at Stanford's Graduate School of Business.



Larry Ellison, chairman of Oracle Corp., was

one of the Silicon Valley executives who

attended a meeting Thursday at Stanford

University with Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir Bin

Mohamad, head of the Malaysian government.

Among those attending: Jim Barksdale, president of Netscape Communications Corp. in Mountain View; Larry Ellison, chairman of Oracle Corp. in Redwood City; Scott McNealy, chairman of Sun Microsystems Inc. of Mountain View; Eckhard Pfeiffer, president of Compaq Computer Corporation in Houston; Lewis Platt, chairman of Hewlett-Packard Co. in Palo Alto; Stan Shih, chairman of Acer Inc. of Taiwan; Masayoshi Son, president of Softbank Corp. of Japan; and Gary Tooker, chairman of Motorola

Inc. of Schaumburg, Ill.

Bill Gates, chairman of Microsoft Corp. in Redmond, Wash., couldn't make the conference but met with Mahathir on Wednesday at a hotel in Santa Clara.

All the executives have agreed to serve on an advisory panel for the Super Corridor and, although Mahathir said Malaysia isn't yet looking for specific commitments, McNealy said Sun will put a software development

Malaysia wants to do more than manufacturing

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team in the sprawling project. Many Silicon Valley companies already rely on Malaysia to produce their products, but now Mahathir hopes he can bring innovation to his country to complement the production.

"The Multimedia Super Corridor is truly a world first — the careful creation of a region with the infrastructure, laws, policies and practices that will enable companies to explore the Information Age without the usual constraints that frustrate them," Mahathir said in a speech Wednesday evening at Stanford.

As part of that commitment, Mahathir offered a "Multimedia Bill of Guarantees" that would protect companies from many of the pitfalls of doing business in developing countries. Malaysia will not require any local ownership for Super Corridor companies, for example, or put limits on bringing in foreign workers. The bill also offers protection for intellectual property and a promise not to censor communications through the Internet.

Mahathir's courtship of Silicon Valley will continue today with a meeting with about two dozen more Silicon Valley executives. Top officials from Cisco Systems Inc., Applied Materials Inc., Yahoo Inc. and Apple Computer Inc. are among those expected to attend.

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