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ALTERA TO SHARE EXPERTISE WITH VARSITIES



IN PARTNERSHIP: Ng (left) exchanging documents with Oh during the MOU signing ceremony between MDeC and Altera to enhance FPGA and VLSI design curricula in IO Malaysian universities. With them are (from left) Fadillah, Idris and MDeC chairman Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali.

By JO TIMBUONG
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KUALA LUMPUR: Semiconductor manufacturer Altera Corp has spent US\$100,000 (RM330,000) to inject its industrial expertise into the current engineering curricula used at local universities.

It signed a memorandum of understanding on Monday with the custodian of the MSC Malaysia initiative, Multimedia Development Corp (MDeC), to enhance the VLSI (very large scale integration) and FPGA (Field-Programmable Gate Array) design curricula.

The investment includes the donation of 600 design boards, the company's Quartus semiconductor

design software and textbooks to set-up a VLSI design laboratory in 10 local universities.

The universities are International Islamic University, Tunku Abdul Rahman College, Multimedia University (both its Cyberjaya and Malacca campuses), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and Universiti Putra Malaysia.

This collaboration between MDeC and Altera is part of the MSC Malaysia Industry-Academia Collaborations Initiative (IAC), which is a long-term measure aimed at producing talent for MSC Malaysia companies and which will address the country's goal of creating a larger pool of knowledge workers.

Under the IAC, university lecturers will be trained by the participating companies in the latest industry curricula and tools and will then impart this knowledge to their students.

Through this initiative, MDeC and Altera have set a goal of training 1,500 relevant engineers by next year.

»Business investments will go to places where there is a large talent pool available so MDeC will continue to come up with ways to enlarge this pool«

NG WAN PENG,
MDeC VICE-PRESIDENT FOR
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

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The universities are expected to start using the new curriculum within the next few months.

"We are scheduling the implementation now," said MDeC vice-president for capacity development, Ng Wan Peng.

She said such a collaboration is important for the local IT industry to flourish and to provide job opportunities for the growing number of graduates.

"Business investments will go to places where there is a large talent pool available so MDeC will continue to come up with ways to enlarge this pool," Ng said.

Besides the IAC, short term solutions like finishing schools are

also used to solve the talent pool problem.

"Such programmes are deployed on demand and we hold courses to help graduates with soft skills like communication and leadership," she said.

Chris Oh, vice-president of Altera Asia Pacific Operations, said injecting industry expertise into university curricula is only part of what Altera wants to achieve.

"Our ultimate goal is to see local minds create future global IT companies," he said, adding that some of Altera's former employees have already done so.

Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation Haji Fadillah Haji Yusof, who was officiating at the MOU signing said MDeC is taking the right steps to prepare graduates for the future.

"Bringing industry expertise into the classroom will help students better understand actual industry practices," he said.

Deputy Minister of Higher Education (1) Datuk Haji Idris Haji Haron, who was also at the event, said the collaboration ties in well with his ministry's intention to reposition university curricula to meet future market demands.

"In turn, such collaborations will help reduce the number of unemployed graduates," he added.