

**‘W**e really don’t have a Venture Capital industry in Malaysia!’ remarks Esmond Goei, the new chief executive officer of MSC Venture Corporation Sdn Bhd (MSCVC), Multimedia Development Corporation’s (MDC) venture capital (VC) arm.

That surprise comment, coming from the man who is seen as heading the top VC company in the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), set the stage for a frank and honest discussion on local venture capital industry.

Born in Palembang, Indonesia of ethnic Baba parentage, Esmond, 52, has a dual American and Canadian citizenship. His wife and his three children reside in California now.

His corporate experience includes being CEO of several companies in North America, working in a bank, serving as a management consultant and as a venture capitalist himself.

An electrical engineer by training, Esmond started his career at Nortel Networks. He describes his first career as ‘an entry level engineer’. While at Nortel, he moved in various departments including manufacturing, operations, marketing, sales and finance.

In 1980, Esmond joined a consulting firm. But he soon realised that consulting wasn’t his forte, as he preferred an action-oriented job. In 1981, he joined Toronto Dominion Bank as a venture capitalist. ‘Within a year, we took our first company public. The deal went public at 20 times the bank’s cost,’ claims Esmond.

Esmond joined MSCVC as its second CEO this August. Datuk Dr Arif Nun, the CEO of MDC, personally handpicked him. *mb-e* caught up with Esmond recently to hear his thoughts on the local venture capital industry.

#### **Tell us about yourself.**

I am probably the most experienced VC in Malaysia now. I have over 20 IPOs in my portfolio and was personally involved in over 10 of them.

On one of the companies, Nhancement Technologies, I turned around the firm and took it to NASDAQ. They were initially focusing on life sciences. I saw that its original business plan wasn’t

# “I am probably the most experienced VC in Malaysia!”



Esmond is on a mission to build a local VC ecosystem.

*By Prathaban V*

#### **How did you end up in MSCVC?**

I was introduced to Datuk Arif Nun by a mutual business contact. We first met in November last year at COMDEX, the biggest ICT expo in the US. By that time, I had already been observing the VC industry in Malaysia for a couple of years.

I like Datuk Arif’s vision and his fresh attitude. We started taking about a job offer only during February this year. I was interested, but a little concerned about government bureaucracy. I was wondering whether I was going to be given a free hand in running the MSCVC operations. To be effective, we need to change our mindset and move fast. Time is critical when we are dealing with technology-centric investment.

Finally I decided to take the offer, as I had wanted to migrate to Malaysia.

Arif later told me that they had invested a considerable sum of money and time to check out my credentials. There had been a prior case of fraud in an MSC-status company and they were taking precautions. I am glad that they did that.

#### **Tell us what you think about the local VC industry.**

I am a very blunt person. We really

going to cut it. So I changed its focus entirely and made it focus on communications systems integration. It was a daunting task, making a shift to a completely different business segment. But it succeeded.

#### **What about your working stint in Singapore?**

In 1986, the Singapore Government recruited me as the CEO of Transtech Ventures, North America operations. It was actually a joint venture VC arm by the Singapore Government’s Economic Development Board and NatSteel. I was with them until 1992.

During my stint there, I opened the United States office for them. I wanted to create new businesses for Singapore as we were the pioneer VC on the island. I got the company involved in investing in many startups and trained many people in VC investment.