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SOUTHEAST ASIA

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KEY LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW



**Datuk Sikh
Shamsul Ibrahim
Sikh Abdul Majid**
Chief Executive Officer
**Malaysian Investment
Development Authority (MIDA)**

SEMICON Southeast Asia 2026
Strategic Partner



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Malaysia has long been a manufacturing stronghold. How is the country progressing in its ambition to become a semiconductor design hub, and where are you seeing the strongest traction so far?

Malaysia's semiconductor journey is, at its core, one of deliberate and steady advancement along the value chain. We built our foundations on assembly and test, and those foundations remain strong. But what we are now building on top of them is far more ambitious: a fully integrated, innovation-led ecosystem that extends from chip design through to advanced packaging and high-value manufacturing.

The traction we are seeing is both real and increasingly visible. Global semiconductor companies are no longer coming here purely for cost advantages. They are investing in design centres, establishing R&D functions, and deepening their local supply chains in ways that clearly reflect confidence in Malaysia's capabilities. This shift from the lower rungs of the value chain toward design, intellectual property, and systems integration is precisely what the New Industrial Master Plan (NIMP) 2030 and the National Semiconductor Strategy (NSS) were designed to drive.

MIDA's role has been to serve as the enabling platform behind these decisions: facilitating targeted investments, building the connective tissue between global players and local suppliers, and ensuring that as each new investor arrives, they strengthen rather than simply extract from the broader ecosystem.

It is worth being precise about where Malaysia's strengths lie today, and where we are heading. Our foundation remains firmly anchored in back-end operations — testing and packaging — underpinned by a robust ecosystem of machinery and equipment manufacturers with decades of deep process expertise. This back-end strength is not a limitation; it is a strategic launchpad.

We are now deliberately leveraging this base, guided by clear policy intent, to move up the value chain into front-end manufacturing, fabless design, and research and development. These are the segments where the highest value is created and retained, and Malaysia is actively strengthening its talent pipelines, infrastructure, and incentive frameworks to compete more effectively. The goal is a semiconductor value chain that is deeper, more resilient, and distinctly Malaysian in capability and ownership.



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What are the key trends you are seeing in semiconductor investments into Malaysia today, and how is MIDA ensuring the country remains competitive amid rising regional competition?

The headline figure speaks for itself: E&E recorded RM28.5 billion in approved investments in 2025. But what interests us far more than the number is its quality and underlying direction.

The trend we are seeing is a shift toward technology-led, higher-value activities. Companies are integrating Malaysia more deeply into their global supply chains and, increasingly, their innovation chains. Major investment commitments, including TF AMD Microelectronics' RM5 billion in advanced packaging and Linergy Power's RM1.2 billion in advanced lithium-ion battery manufacturing underscore this shift – spanning semiconductors and adjacent deep tech sectors that support AI, electrification, and energy transition.

Supply chain resilience has moved from being a risk management issue to a strategic priority at board level for most multinationals. The disruptions of recent years have made companies more conscious of the risks of geographic concentration, and Malaysia benefits directly from that recalibration. We offer what no single competitor can replicate in isolation: a proven 50-year track record, a well-developed supplier ecosystem, a skilled and multilingual workforce, and a policy environment that is consistent, transparent, and forward-looking.

Platforms like SEMICON SEA 2026 are integral to how we position and differentiate ourselves. It is a structured mechanism for deal-making, for connecting global OEMs with Malaysian SMEs that are capable of becoming tier-one suppliers, and for positioning Malaysia as a thought leader in the conversations that will shape the next wave of semiconductor investments.



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When we talk about supply chain resilience in the semiconductor industry, what does that actually mean for everyday Malaysians in terms of jobs, income, and economic stability?

Supply chain resilience, in concrete terms, means that Malaysian workers are not the most vulnerable when the global economy contracts. When a company has integrated Malaysian suppliers and Malaysian engineers deeply into its value chain, it cannot simply disengage overnight. That depth of integration is what creates stable, durable employment rather than the kind of cyclical exposure that leaves communities vulnerable.

The practical consequences are far-reaching. A more resilient supply chain draws in more long-term capital investment, which raises the floor of wages and skills in surrounding communities. Facilitating local investor participation is not secondary for MIDA – it is central to everything we do. *#InvestLokal* reflects that core: ensuring that every investment we facilitate creates a structured pathway for Malaysian companies, Malaysian suppliers, and Malaysian entrepreneurs to become meaningful participants in these value chains, not passive bystanders. That sustained, broadening participation generates stable livelihoods, tax revenues that fund schools, hospitals, and infrastructure, and a strong economic foundation that insulates communities from external shocks.

The numbers reflect this clearly. Malaysia's semiconductor exports rose 19.6% to MYR147 billion between January 2025 and January 2026, with integrated circuits alone accounting for 32% of total exports – and there are currently 33 active capital projects worth approximately USD20 billion in the pipeline. This momentum is expected to continue, with semiconductor exports supporting Malaysia's projected GDP growth of 4.0 – 4.5% this year, alongside overall employment expansion to 17.2 million persons. On the talent front, Malaysia is on track to develop 60,000 skilled semiconductor workers by 2030, supported by Budget 2026, which introduces three million high-tech sector training opportunities under the Human Resources Development Corporation.

What we are ultimately building through NIMP 2030 and NSS is an economic architecture in which Malaysia's position in global semiconductor supply chains is too valuable to be easily replaced. That is the difference between being a low-cost outpost and being an indispensable partner – and our focus is on steadily moving Malaysia towards the latter.



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As the industry moves toward advanced packaging, AI-driven chips, and next-generation technologies, how is Malaysia positioning itself to capture these opportunities?

The next wave of semiconductor value creation sits at the intersection of advanced packaging, AI-optimised silicon, and heterogeneous integration. These are not distant possibilities; they are already influencing investment decisions, and Malaysia is actively positioning itself to be central to all three.

Advanced packaging, in particular, is an area where Malaysia's existing strengths in precision manufacturing provide a clear competitive edge. The transition from conventional packaging to chiplet architectures and 3D integration requires exactly the kind of high-skilled, high-precision manufacturing capability that Malaysia has been building for decades. For AI-driven chips, the opportunity lies both in their manufacture and in the ecosystem of components, substrates, and ancillary systems they require. SEMICON SEA plays a direct role here: it is the venue where Malaysian SMEs encounter the capability requirements of global chip companies, and where those conversations about co-development and supply chain integration begin.

MIDA's objective is to ensure that when those conversations end, the partnerships that result are anchored in Malaysia. We are focused on technology adoption, SME capability development, and strategic facilitation that keeps Malaysia not just relevant but increasingly integral in the next era of semiconductor innovation.



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What are you hoping global investors, partners and industry players will take away about Malaysia after engaging here at SEMICON SEA?

I want them to leave with a clear and unambiguous understanding of what Malaysia represents in the global semiconductor landscape. Not as a low-cost assembly base, but as a high-value, innovation-capable partner with the depth and ambition to grow alongside the industry's most demanding requirements.

The evidence is clear. We saw RM28.5 billion in approved E&E investments last year, supported by clear policy direction under NIMP 2030 and the NSS. At the same time, Malaysian companies are moving up the value chain into areas such as design support, precision components, and advanced materials. SEMICON SEA brings these strengths together and makes them visible to the decision-makers who matter.

But beyond the numbers and policy frameworks, the message I most want to convey is one of partnership. Malaysia does not approach the semiconductor industry as a passive recipient of capital. We approach it as a committed, forward-looking partner in building supply chains that are resilient, value chains that generate shared prosperity, and an ecosystem that remains relevant not just today, but well into the future. That, ultimately, is what Malaysia stands for.



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