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Investor-NIC

By Thomas Savarimuthu

(P)

IPOH, April 18 (Bernama) -- A leading foreign investor here is confident Malaysia will become a Newly-Industrialised Country (NIC) by the year 2020 as envisioned by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad

Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Carsen (M) Sdn Bhd, Encik Colin D_Mac_Donald said Malaysia could attain the status well in less than the 30 years envisaged should the existing government policies to woo investors with attractive incentives continue.

"I don't see any reason why Malaysia's objective to become an NIC could not become a reality... I think it might be faster than expected," he told Bernama in an interview today.

Encik Mac Donald, a Canadian, who has vast experience working in Canada, the United States, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, feels that Malaysia would experience a boom in industrial development in the next few years judging from the scramble by foreign investors to invest in the country.

Japanese, Taiwanese and Korean investors, who are in the process of relocating their industries, have made Malaysia their first choice for their investments in this region, he said. -- more

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Likening Malaysia to an "unpolished diamond", Encik Mac Donald, who is also a Vice President of the Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce, said the Visit Malaysia Year (VMY) programme had opened the eyes of the international community to the country's abundant resources and vast potential in commerce and trade.

Spurred by a worldwide boom in the electronics industry, his company, Malaysia's only semi-conductor sub-contract company, will inject \$100 million into an expansion drive over the next three years.

The firm bought a 12.4 hectare piece of land in the Taman Meru Industrial Estate in Jelapang near here for its new \$20 million plant, he added.

Encik Mac Donald, said however labour shortage problems, which were becoming increasingly critical in Malaysia, transportation and accommodation facilities for factory workers warranted serious and immediate attention by the authorities before the situation worsened.

These were very important aspects to be rectified to ensure Malaysia attained NIC status, he said, adding that new investors coming to Malaysia were facing difficulties in getting workers for their factories.-- more

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Citing an example, he said two large firms in Malaysia which initially planned to invest a few million ringgit on expansion projects in the country have decided to go to Batam in Indonesia due to labour shortage problems.

As an interim solution, Encik Mac Donald said MICC was considering to suggest to the government to allow import of foreign labour to ease the shortage in the industrial sector.

Though the government was taking steps to remedy the situation by building new technical and vocational schools as well as training institutes, he said these programmes took time.

He said neighbouring countries like Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines which had big populations could pose a serious challenge to Malaysia's industrialisation programme if the labour shortage problem was not tackled from now.

Encik Mac Donald said due to poor transport facilities to his factory, his company had to hire 20 buses to ferry workers to work and home daily.

The company has also rented 35 houses to provide accommodation facilities for 550 women staff with a subsidised rent of \$15 per month.

He urged the State Economic Development Corporations (SEDC) to provide more accommodation facilities for factory workers by building more hostels near their work place to woo more people to work in factories. -- Bernam

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