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Mahathir-Corridor

DR MAHATHIR HOLDS TALKS AND MEETINGS WITH TOP AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN

By: Salmy Hashim

SAN FRANCISCO, May 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who arrived here Saturday, continues to pursue his strategy of attracting advanced technology companies to invest in Malaysia's exciting Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) that will stretch from the Kuala Lumpur City Centre to the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA).

The prime minister's visit to San Francisco and Washington DC, just after an intensive working visit to Japan, is jam-packed with speeches, and meetings with eight senators, top American businessmen from high-tech multinational companies, and also tours of Stanford University Technology Park, the San Francisco Discovery Museum, and Sun Microsystems, Inc., a computer-technology company.

Sun Microsystems is the creator of Java, a software that makes it easier and more exciting for computer users to surf the Internet.

Stephen J. Sparrow, a manager with the Silicon Valley company explained that Java could be applied in schools, hospitals, government offices, businesses and manufacturing companies. "It brings the Internet alive with its moving images and can certainly change the way we do business."

At a gathering of the American Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) here Saturday, Dr Mahathir told members that he was in the United States to attract more technology-based industries such as makers of computer software and wafer fabrications to locate their plants in Malaysia, especially in the proposed MSC.

The MSC is an area, 15 km by 40 km, linking the KLCC, the new government administrative centre, Putrajaya, and the new KLIA, projected for completion in 1998. These three mega-projects are expected to become a huge market for multimedia products and services, and serve the regional and world markets for multimedia products and services.

The government's strategy under the recently-launched Seventh Malaysia Plan is to upgrade the skills of Malaysians in high technology so that they can increase their income, as the country attempts to reduce its dependence on foreign workers. Malaysia, which has reached full employment, has more than one million foreign employees working in the country.

But if Malaysian workers continued to demand for higher wages without improving their skills, "we'll be out of the market," Dr Mahathir said to a packed room of Muslim businessmen who are eager to find out more about his impressive style of leadership and Malaysia's success story as a small Muslim developing nation.

The prime minister will witness the signing of several memorandums of understanding including between Renong Bhd and Owen Pharmaceuticals, and between Sapura Holdings and Chaparral Communications.

On Monday, he will open the Malaysia-US Business Technology Partnership Dialogue, a forum to attract American high-tech companies to invest in Malaysia.

The one-day dialogue that brings together some 200 Malaysian and American businessmen is jointly organised by the Asian Strategic Leadership Institute (Asli) and Pacific Basin Economic (PBEC) Malaysia. -- BERNAMA

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