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Dr M invites Japanese computer-based companies to invest in MSC applications

Calvin Goh in Tokyo

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday expressed the hope that Japanese investors will consider participating in one or more of the seven specific applications in Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor.

The applications are electronic government, SMART schools and distance learning, telemedicine, a single multi-purpose card, government and financial application, borderless marketing and customer care, and worldwide manufacturing webs.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived here on Sunday from the United States where he led a mission to woo high technology computer-based companies to join the Multimedia Super Corridor, was speaking at the Tokyo Investor Conference on the MSC at Okura Hotel, where he is staying during his three-day working visit.

"I hope you will consider participating in one or more of these (applications) by locating in Cyberjaya," he said, adding that Malaysia would also welcome their experience and capital as an investor in Cyberjaya.

Cyberjaya is a garden city within the MSC, which is being designed to provide the physical and psychological spaces needed for contemplation, creativity and relaxation.

"It will be built around a new Multimedia University. The first phase of Cyberjaya will be open in 1999," Dr Mahathir said.

He added that it would provide top-quality intelligent buildings, multimedia enterprise estates, residential housing, leisure and recreation facilities and state-of-the-art supporting infrastructure.

The MSC is a 15km-by-50km-long corridor that runs from the world's tallest building, the Kuala Lumpur City Centre, to what will be the region's largest airport at Sepang when it opens next year.

"The MSC will have the best physical infrastructure that can be offered in the world," he said.

There will also be rapid train links to Kuala Lumpur, a SMART-highway and two new intelligent garden cities.

The first is Putrajaya, the administrative capital where most of the government departments will be situated beginning with the Prime Minister's Department next year.

The other is the neighbouring Cyberjaya.

Dr Mahathir also said that no other country was even considering anything similar to the MSC project.

"We are not adapting a new concept to an existing area; we are building and installing the latest on a huge greenfield site designed to realise the full potential of the multimedia.

"We do not see the multimedia merely as a new type of information technology but rather as a tool to create a knowledge-based society as well as harvest its potential economic, social and cultural rewards."

He also said that one of the 10 Multimedia Development Corporation offices to be opened in the world over the next two years would be in Tokyo.

The MDC is a fully empowered one-stop shop and will manage and market the MSC.

The Tokyo Investor Conference was organised by Nippon Telegraph & Telephone Corp and was attended by about 40 senior executives of Japanese

companies.

They included Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. Ltd director Katsuro Sakakibara; Furukawa Electric Co. Ltd executive vice-president Tsugtomu Ikeda; Sharp Corporation executive director Buheita Fujiwara; Sony Corp. board member Toshiyuki Yamada, and Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubitshi Ltd managing director Ryuichi Ohno.

Dr Mahathir also chaired a closed-door round-table conference attended by 25 chief executive officers of top Japanese electronic companies.

They included Sony Corp. president and COO Nobuyuki Idei; NEC Corp. chairman Dr Tadahiro Sekimoto; Casio Computer Company Ltd president Kazuo Kashio; Sharp Corp president Haruo Tsuji; Sumitomo chairman Tomiichi Akiyama, and Sega Enterprises Ltd president Hayao Nakayama.

Dr Mahathir also met individually with several Japanese corporate leaders.

They were Hiroshi Araki, president of Tokyo Electric Power Co. Ltd; Koretsugu Kodama, president of Japan International Development Organisation; Minoru Murofushi, president and CEO of Itochu Corporation; Sumitomo's Akiyama and its president, Kenji Miyahara, and NTT president Jun-ichiro Miyazu.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had received an overwhelmingly positive response from the entertainment companies in southern California and the high technology companies in Silicon Valley on developing the MSC during his visit last week.

He also said he received "excellent suggestions" from members of the International Advisory Panel to the MSC. He chaired the inaugural meeting of the IAP at Stanford University in Santa Clara, about an hour's drive from San Francisco, last Thursday.

The IAP is a group of leading CEOs of global technology companies and international multimedia experts who will advise the Prime Minister on how to create a world-best environment for the multimedia in the MSC.

Last Friday in the US, he said the MDC would also have an office in Silicon Valley.

At a Press conference yesterday afternoon for the Japanese and Malaysian media, Dr Mahathir said Japanese companies were welcome to set up their offices in the MSC - whether to create content for multimedia, to carry out research and development or to provide or devise new educational material for use through the multimedia.

These were areas in which Malaysia would like to see the involvement of Japanese companies in the MSC, he said in response to a question by a Japanese reporter.

To another question, he said Japanese companies had thus far seemed to show a keen interest in the MSC and a number of Japanese corporate leaders who met him personally also expressed strong support for the project.

They found the provision of the law, policies and practices in the MSC conducive to their participation, he added.

Also present at the Press conference was NTT president Miyazu who said that the NTT, which was involved in the MSC project, would like to do everything it could to help develop the project.

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