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DR MAHATHIR INVITES CANADIAN FIRMS TO JOIN MSC

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad has invited Canadian firms to join the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) which is destined to benefit Malaysia, being the host country, and foreign firms participating in the IT project as well.

Dr. Mahathir said Canada, which is at the forefront of Information Technology (IT), particularly in fibre optic technology, could transfer technology to Malaysia, which is keen to develop new technologies indigenous to Malaysia.

He also noted that it was this expertise in fibre optics that enabled Canada to supply the first submarine cable from Europe to Canada's Newfoundland.

And "a fibre optic network with the capacity to transmit 2.5 to 10 gigabit-per-minute will provide the backbone for the MSC," he said in his speech at the Canadian Investors' Conference at Ottawa here today. His speech was delivered on his behalf by Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia wants to be part of the global industry's endeavour to develop intelligent multimedia solutions to manage today's exploding range of information options.

He said MSC promises to be a good deal for all as the second phase of the MSC project would see it linked to other cities in Malaysia and around the world.

"By then, we expect in excess of 250 companies within the MSC and by the year 2020, the entire country would be a Multimedia Super Corridor with a total of at least 12 intelligent cities linked to the global information superhighway."

It would thus become a "global link to all the other smart cities on this planet Earth and MSC participants would have risen to 500 world class enterprises," he said.

Dr. Mahathir said the "hard" infrastructure was being put into place on a fast track basis, but the "soft" infrastructure was an area which would need the greatest innovation.

As a further incentive for firms wanting to invest in the MSC, the Prime Minister said MSC Status companies could deal directly with him in his capacity as the chairman of the MSC Implementation Council and International Advisory Panel or his deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Since the MSC had received heartening response from Hollywood, the Silicon Valley, the United Kingdom, Hungary and Japan, Dr. Mahathir said he hoped that Canadian companies would soon be represented in the MSC.

An encouraging note, he said, was that Canadian telecommunications firm, Bell Canada, was already involved in the MSC with its chairman, Lynton Wilson having accepted the invitation to serve on the International Advisory Panel to counsel Malaysia on the corridor.

Besides this, the Simon Fraser University of Canada is the lead consultant recruited to help set up the proposed Multimedia University in the corridor, while Malaysia was also keen on enhancing research and development into IT.

Here, he cited Canada's Nortel, a key IT player which has five plants in Malaysia, whose vast R&D spending was something that Malaysia wanted to emulate so as to be able to translate its R&D into commercial production.

Dr. Mahathir also said Malaysia was keen on expanding trade and

investment linkages with Canada.

Bilateral trade doubled between 1993 and 1996 from just over US\$1 billion (RM3.4 billion) to US\$2.1 billion (RM7.14 billion) with Canadian exports to Malaysia totalling US\$536.5 million (RM1.824 billion) and Malaysia's exports to Canada were at US\$1.6 billion (RM5.44 billion). --

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MR SHY