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Dr M: Nation can gain directly from MSC

Ashraf Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Malaysians can benefit directly from the Multimedia Super Corridor by learning new skills and expertise brought in by multinationals which set up their operations there.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who said this today added that the people could not depend on foreigners to help them but should take advantage of the opportunities created by the MSC to master all aspects of the information technology.

"If the MSC is set up in this region, we can develop the region, we can learn new technology and we may even be involved in the technology and be more adept in its application than others," he said.

The Prime Minister was speaking at a dialogue after briefing Barisan Nasional leaders including Members of Parliament and State Assemblymen on the MSC and social ills at the Putra World Trade Centre.

He was responding to a question from the floor which suggested that Malaysia might not benefit from the MSC because the Government gave too many concessions in the Bill of Guarantees to companies operating within the MSC.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was aware that foreigners would come to Malaysia for their own self-interest rather than helping the nation to succeed.

"We realise that the foreigners are here to ensure our success but for their own interest.

"It is up to us to decide how we benefit from their presence here," he said.

He pointed out that although foreign investors who ventured into the manufacturing sector here reaped much profit, the Government did not tax them before.

However, the country benefited from the foreign investments through the employment opportunities created so much so that 100 per cent of Malaysians had job opportunities.

"It is a reality that foreign investments had made the nation much richer now and the people are enjoying more income than before.

"If such investments had not been forthcoming, I'm sure our people will be unemployed."

Dr Mahathir said the same approach was being applied in the development of the MSC which the Government was now implementing on a trial basis.

"But to protect our interests, we have taken precaution which was not done before... we restrict the MSC to the designated area only so that if any undesirable development occurred, it would not spread throughout the country."

The MSC is made up of a 15 by 50km area from Kuala Lumpur and stretching southwards. It covers the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC), the Federal Government's new administrative centre of Putrajaya and the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang.

The Prime Minister said the MSC would be a trial zone to locate companies involved in multimedia as the Government was dealing with something which it had yet to understand fully.

"This time we are dealing with something which we do not understand 100 per cent.

"We do not know what is coming, what we know is that if it is done elsewhere, we will still feel the negative effect.

"That is why we cannot make guarantees, that is why we restrict them to the designated zone...this is our precaution.

"We take precautionary measures so as not to expose the whole of Malaysia," he said.

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