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Imminent MSC take-off will put sceptics to pasture

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IN this age of successful privatisation, it is surprising that there are still many who have doubts about Malaysia's capability to pull off mega-projects, with the Multimedia Super Corridor being the latest target.

But, it should come as no surprise to many others who have been bristling under the collar whenever these doubts hit the headlines all too often in the past.

It does not take much digging into our memories to recall some other major projects that had been successfully completed despite these misgivings on funds - with the North-South Expressway and the two Measat satellites being perhaps the most graphic examples.

Doubts about the MSC project is not a new issue.

These misgivings started with the Petronas Twin Towers and the new KL International Airport at Sepang, even though these two projects were not originally seen as being part of the MSC project.

While there had been some reasonable questions raised about the safety aspects of these project structures as well as that of worker's welfare and workmanship, the questions often turned out to be disguised doubts about the nation's funding capacity.

Perhaps the most vicious rumour has been that of one Petronas Twin Tower leaning, with the likelihood of that tower possibly collapsing due to the limestone substructure below.

This simplistic view may be all right coming from an uneducated person's point-of-view.

But are we Malaysians, and all those foreigners who have chipped into the doubting chorus, still that uneducated so as not to recognise advances in technologies?

What does it take to convince everyone that all possible precautions and more have been taken with regard to the substructure so that the Petronas Twin Towers will still stand tall in the 22nd century and beyond?

Perhaps the most laughable aspect of these doubting Thomases is how quickly they jumped onto the likelihood of one tower leaning, when the actual word used was "swaying" - in the way that all tall building have to withstand high winds, in the same way of padi reeds.

Taking a step back from this unending fray of doubting Thomases, maybe the best thing to do is to simply take a leaf from our past and use it as the most convincing argument - ignore the doubters.

And there is enough convincing evidence to let all Malaysians and any foreigner who is prepared to be reasonable to comfortably take this stand.

The Petronas Twin Towers - which mark the northernmost point of the MSC project - are ready for occupation, with some of the offices already occupied and operating.

The KL Tower, which again is another important aspect of the MSC project, has been operational with its revolving tower restaurant spinning away merrily with satisfied diners every evening.

The KL International Airport is almost close to completion, despite the massive cement shortage over a year ago and in spite of supposed difficulties in raising funds.

This project - which marks the southernmost part of the MSC project - is due to be operational within the next 10 months and again will play a crucial part in being a gateway for businesses to stream in and out of the country.

So, why shouldn't the rest of the MSC project be seen the same way as well?

Why is there a need for no less a personage than that of our Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim having to publicly state there will be no financial burden envisaged for the new Federal administration centre Putrajaya - which is yet another important part of the MSC?

Should we still pander to the vocal minority who will always insist on raising doubts, when much much more can be achieved by working in co-operation with the mostly silent majority who have helped fuel our enviable economic growth?

The answers may not seem so obvious, because the vocal minority lay claim - and rightly so to some extent - to be the playing the role of the nation's conscience.

If so, why can't this vocal minority work in co-operation with the majority to achieve all aims that most reasonable individuals would want, instead of simply wasting resources by taking on an adversarial or insidious stance?

Old arguments that attention to the human condition is often swept aside in pursuit of economic progress no longer holds water, nor is the argument that no one pays attention to such minor details.

The MSC project is clearly geared to overcome the issues of access to information as well as disseminating information, especially with the clearly stated intention of an electronic Government with equal access to all except for some sensitive matters.

Take the Democratic Action Party, for example, with its Internet homepage. The nation's main opposition party has clearly recognised the vast potential of the electronic communications medium that will be the underlying concept behind the MSC project.

People who still have doubts about the MSC project's funding can also tap into this new medium and have their views heard and debated openly in front of all the audience they can want and more.

But, unfortunately, these same individuals that hacken to express their misgivings in private will also prove to be chicken when made to stand behind their opinions.

Why? If anything, Malaysia has proven to be a very tolerant set of people as is its Government. There is hardly any personal vendetta taken against loud dissidents, as has been clearly practised in many other nations like Russia and dictator-run African states, and has been alleged even in Singapore by a recent runaway politician.

This same openness on the part of Malaysia has definitely struck a chord amongst many locals and foreigners, judging on how much capital investments are pouring into business daily. And skills, another disguised raising of doubt on the part of the nation's capacity to raise and keep increasing its funds for use in mega projects, is now becoming less of an issue these days.

The flurry of activity over the last few days relating to the MSC project is another good evidence that many foreigners have also recognised this new strengths being developed by Malaysians.

Samsung Electronics of South Korea, which just opened a 52ha manufacturing complex has perhaps given one of the most resounding endorsements of the MSC vision, despite having faced much problems worldwide with the falling prices of its computer memory chips.

Even our local royalty has gotten into the act to endorse the MSC project, with the Kedah Sultan calling for a mini MSC project be set up in the northern state.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has already laid down the

gauntlet by stating the MSC project will take off next month with the launching of the Multimedia University and the research and development centre of Pana's Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation.

And should any emerging but viable business related to the MSC project still need funds, Mesdaq Bhd will launch the nation's over-the-counter exchange by the end of this year for such fund-raising exercises through listings.

Given these developments, together with many that have already had countless working committees slaving around the clock in the past months to develop some of the MSC project's core services, and the nation's healthy economic outlook, it looks like only a nuclear war worldwide can stop the MSC project now.

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