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Make MSC project a success (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar today urged Malaysians to support the Multimedia Super Corridor and ensure its success.

Noting that only countries which could master information technology could keep pace with rapid global development, the King said it was the responsibility of all Malaysians to ensure that the nation's vision to conquer the technology materialised.

Opening the third session of the ninth Parliament which was attended by members of both Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara, the King said the MSC would provide the perfect environment for companies to take advantage of the opportunities brought by the Information Age.

"This year will also witness efforts being taken to initiate the development of Cyberjaya and the Multimedia University," he said.

The MSC, which covers the new Government administrative centre in Putrajaya, Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang, and the Kuala Lumpur City Centre, encompasses an area of about 15km wide and 50km long.

Cyberjaya, which is the neighbouring garden city of Putrajaya will provide quality intelligent buildings, multimedia enterprise estates, residential housing, leisure and recreation facilities, and state-of-the-art supporting infrastructure.

The King also said priority would be given to the development of telecommunications infrastructure in the next four years as part of the Government's effort to turn Malaysia into a leading telecommunications centre in the Asia-Pacific and eventually, the world.

"To achieve this objective, the Government will soon formulate the Telecommunications Master Plan," he said, adding that the telecommunications sector was expected to record continued growth.

The King expressed satisfaction with the country's average annual economic growth of eight per cent recorded over the last decade, and the steps taken by the Government to reduce the current account deficit in the balance of payments.

"The deficit which was at RM18.7 billion in 1995 is expected to reduce to RM11.5 billion this year.

"Strategies implemented to overcome this problem, including increasing exports and reducing imports, should be continued."

He added that the Government was also relentless in its efforts to increase savings.

"Although the nation's level of savings is substantial at 38.8 per cent of the gross national product last year, nevertheless, the robust economy needs bigger investments especially when our nation is moving towards growth that is spurred by productivity.

"It is obvious that the nation requires a more advanced technology, more modern management techniques and even a more efficient production system. All these require bigger capital and quality investments."

He said the nation's rapid development was expected to raise the prices of goods.

"Therefore, while efforts are being taken to control inflation, steps should also be taken to ensure that demand for supplies remained low, and unnecessary spendings, avoided."

The King also urged all parties to help curb the social problems affecting the young, saying that the future depended on those who would

inherit the nation and further the struggle to develop society.

He said the responsibility to develop youths should be shouldered by all quarters, from the family, the private sector to non-governmental organisations.

The King said the Government was stepping up efforts to strengthen the family institution, noting that a healthy and strong family would produce citizens of calibre and of high moral standard.

"Religious and educational programmes to inculcate good values and social ethics such as self-discipline, tolerance, love and respect for one another, should be emphasised."

The King hoped that the Islamic Affairs Division in the Prime Minister's Department which had been upgraded to a department, would assist the Government in combating social problems such as dadah abuse, AIDS and other negative elements.

He added that in line with the inculcation of Islamic values and to tackle present challenges, the New Islamic Education Curriculum which had futuristic features and was capable of achieving a 100 per cent Quran literacy and Fardhu Ain (the basics of Islam), would be implemented in 1998.

Earlier, the King opened the ninth Parliament in a colourful ceremony.

Accompanied by Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Najihah, the King arrived at Parliament Square at 10am where the official welcoming ceremony was held.

The royal couple was greeted on arrival by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

The King then inspected a guard-of-honour mounted by 112 men and eight officers of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment led by Mejar Hamdi Abdul Rahman.

A 21-gun salute marked the occasion.

Also present were Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Mohd Zahir Ismail, Dewan Negara president Tan Sri Mohamed Yaacob, Chief Justice of the Federal Court Tan Sri Eusoff Chin, members of the diplomatic corps, Ministers, Deputy Ministers, MPs, Senators and senior government officials.

The royal couple entered the House at 10.30am where the King delivered the royal address.

Later, the King met with MPs, Senators, senior civil servants and foreign dignitaries. The Dewan Rakyat will sit for 26 days from tomorrow while the Dewan Negara will sit for 15 days from May 12.

The Dewan Rakyat meetings will be held from Mondays to Thursdays until May 7 while the Dewan Negara will meet until June 5, during which at least four Bills are expected to be tabled.

The Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Ministry will table the Computer Crimes Bill 1997 and the Digital Signature Bill 1997.

The other two are the Supplementary Supply (1996 and 1997) Bill 1997 and the Copyright (Amendment) Bill 1997.

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