

27/06/1997

## MDC-Infopark pact marks beginning of new cooperation

Kamarul Yunus in Budapest

BUDAPEST, Wed: The signing of a memorandum of understanding between Multimedia Development Corp and Infopark RT on Monday marked the beginning of a new cooperation between Malaysia and Hungary in the development of information technology (IT).

It reflects the aspiration and commitment from both countries in wanting to assist in developing each other's IT industry. The presence of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his Hungarian counterpart Gyula Horn to witness the signing was proof of this commitment.

Undoubtedly, Dr Mahathir's two-day working visit to Hungary was a success, especially in terms of promoting Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) to Hungarian businessmen.

The response from the Hungarian businessmen was overwhelming based on the number of questions raised when Dr Mahathir briefed them on the MSC during a seminar here yesterday. The businessmen were also given a presentation by MDC on MSC, a 15km by 50km zone stretching between the Petronas Twin Towers and the new KL International Airport in Sepang.

Questions on MSC were also asked by Hungarian journalists during a press conference after a bilateral meeting between Dr Mahathir and Horn on Monday. The Prime Minister fielded more questions when he visited the Ikarus vehicle manufacturing plant in Szekesfehervar and Videoton computer industries centre.

MDC executive chairman Tan Sri Othman Yeop Abdullah said the MOU will definitely benefit both countries in their aspiration to develop an IT hub in each other country.

While Malaysia is promoting the MSC, Hungary, too, is trying to promote its technology park through Infopark RT. As little is known about Hungary, few realised that the republic is more advanced than Malaysia in terms of IT development. Hungary has also produced 12 Nobel prize winners. It churns out 1,000 engineers every two months.

Still, the benefit of a collaboration between Infopark RT and MDC is not limited to Malaysia. Hungary will also be able to promote its technology park to major multimedia companies participating in the MSC, a special zone developed by the Government to turn Malaysia into a global IT centre.

Malaysia also believes that the tie-up with Infopark will enable the MSC to link with other technology hubs in Europe, Asia and the US.

Besides IT, Dr Mahathir's visit has also opened up doors to closer cooperation in tourism and air transportation. Both governments are also keen now to jointly reconstruct Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In the tourism industry, Hungary has invited Malaysian entrepreneurs to invest or set up joint ventures to provide facilities such as hotels. Malaysia Airlines or Air Asia will also pursue a link-up to provide air services to Hungary.

Dr Mahathir had said the proposed air service can be conducted through joint cooperation, either using a code-share arrangement or even acquiring a stake in Malev, Hungary's national air carrier.

Malaysia is also seeking the cooperation from Hungary's expertise to help redevelop the economy of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Dr Mahathir had said the Bosnian Government has offered many redevelopment projects to Malaysia but so far, no contract was concluded, mainly attributed to inadequate skilled manpower in Malaysia.

Apart from this, Hungary's expertise is also sought after to help

redevelop Bosnia-Herzegovina since the republic is just near the Balkan state.

Malaysian entrepreneurs and businessmen can also use Hungary as a gateway to penetrate the central and eastern European markets, including the Balkan states such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia and Czech Republic.

On the converse, Hungary businessmen can use Malaysia as a gateway to the dynamic economies of the South-East Asian region.

Actually how successful Dr Mahathir's visit to Hungary will depend on follow-through efforts, especially by the private sectors from both countries. Taken well, the economic benefits that each country has to offer the other are quite significant.

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