

25 MAR 1997

Parliament-MSc

MSC ATTRACTS LOCAL AND WORLDWIDE INTEREST

KUALA LUMPUR, March 25 (Bernama) -- A total of 583 local and international companies have applied to participate in the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) with four already given the "MSC Status", the Dewan Rakyat was told today.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said 122 of the applications were from international companies while 461 others were local companies.

The four given "MSC Status" were Malaysian Institute of Microelectronics Systems (Mimos) Berhad, Telekom Malaysia Bhd, Nippon Telephone & Telegraph (NTT) and Sun Microsystems, he said when answering questions related to the MSC during question time.

The questions were brought up by Datuk Abu Zahar Ujang (BN-Kuala Pilah), Dr Tan Kee Kwong (BN-Segambut), Datuk Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis (BN-Rompin), Dr Ramli Taib (BN-Kemaman), Dr Yap Yit Thong (BN-Lumut), Dr Tan Seng Giaw (DAP-Kepong), Abdul Aziz Yassin (BN-Muar), Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar (BN-Batang Lupar) and Ruhanie Ahmad (BN-Parit Sulong).

Anwar, who is Finance Minister, said the "MSC Status" was given to companies that met three criteria -- producing multimedia/information technology products of international standards, have enough skilled workers and were capable of transferring technology.

The MSC, which covers the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC), Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang, the new government administrative centre in Putrajaya and its neighbouring Cyberjaya, encompasses an area of about 15km wide and 50km long.

Anwar said a study by the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC) had revealed that the interest of international companies to invest in Malaysia was lower before the MSC was initiated.

"It is clear that the commitment of Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) and his visits to San Francisco and Tokyo recently have succeeded in introducing the MSC to the world and attract the interest of investors," he said.

Anwar said six cyber laws in the form of "commerce enabling laws" and "societal laws", would be formulated this year to encourage electronics trade and provide security to users in the MSC.

He said four of the six proposed laws -- Digital Signature Act, Copyright (Amendment) Act 1997 to incorporate clauses on intellectual rights, Computer Crimes Act and Telemedicine Act -- would be tabled in the current session.

Two others, Electronic Government Act and Multimedia Convergence Act, would be tabled at the next parliamentary session.

Anwar said the extensive cyber laws as well as incentives and specific policies were introduced to ensure maximum benefits could be derived from the setting up of the multimedia/information technology and facilities.

He said the implementation strategy comprising seven applications -- worldwide manufacturing web, borderless marketing, research and development cluster, smart schools, multipurpose card, telemedicine, electronic government and multimedia fund haven -- at the MSC was expected to be ready this June.

A multimedia university would be set up to cater for the long-term needs of producing local professionals in the field of information technology, he said.

"As a pioneer towards the establishment of the multimedia university, Telekom Malaysia has been directed to locate the Multimedia Faculty of the Telecom University in the MSC," he said.

To encourage local participation in the MSC, Anwar said the government had introduced "venture capital" or developed "over trade counter (OTC)" market.

He said the government had also allotted 20 per cent of the allocation for research and development (R&D) under the Seventh Malaysia Plan to MDC for distribution among small and local enterprises apart from R&D grants given to local companies.

"The MSC will bring tremendous benefits to the people and country. The presence of world renowned multimedia corporations in the MSC will provide opportunities for local companies to participate in the multimedia industry through consortiums or joint ventures," he said.

To a supplementary question from Ruhanie, Anwar said in its efforts to attract giant multimedia corporations, the government could not force them to adhere to the policy on Bumiputera equity quota as in other investments.

However, he said the government would ensure that the corporations undertake to transfer their technology by providing employment to locals.

To a supplementary question by opposition leader Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Tanjung), Anwar said the privileges given under MSC had prompted several international multimedia experts who were not included in the International Advisory Panel to request that they be included.

He said the Prime Minister's visit to the United States recently had met with good response, enabling the country to attract 29 multimedia and IT experts from around the world to sit in the panel.

To a supplementary question from Dr Tan, Anwar said the government was grateful with the positive attitude shown by the opposition parties to make the MSC a success.

To a question from Wan Junaidi, he said the MSC would enhance the activities of the services sector to ensure a more sustainable economic growth.

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