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Mahathir-MSK

MULTIMEDIA SUPER CORRIDOR TO TAKE OFF NEXT MONTH, SAYS PM

SEREMBAN, Feb 24 (Bernama) -- The much-awaited Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) is expected to take off the ground next month with the Multimedia University and Nippon Telephone and Telegraph (NTT) of Japan set to become the first two organisations to begin their operations.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC) was expected to give the green light to the two organisations soon, making them the first "experiment" projects of the MSC, his brainchild.

He said that the NPP would set up its Research & Development (R&D) facilities while the university would be located in "Cyberjaya" next to Putrajaya, the new administrative centre.

Dr Mahathir said the MDC has so far received over 400 inquiries from foreign and local joint-venture multimedia companies mostly dealing in software and producing electronic components and contents, since his trip to the United States and Japan last month on a mission to "sell the MSC".

"But the list is not complete. I too have received a lot (of inquiries) myself," he told reporters after opening the Samsung Electronics Seremban complex in Sungai Gadut near here.

The Prime Minister said the response towards the MSC was "overwhelmingly hot" that inquiries and proposals continued to pour in from small firms to large conglomerates.

He said the MDC would study all applications and proposals received so far next month before deciding on the companies.

"We do not want all. Only those specifically related to the information technology," he said.

He said Malaysia would like to see companies interested in participating in the MSC project to locate their manufacturing plants, research and development facilities and operations here.

On local firms' involvement in the MSC, Dr Mahathir said the government would not impose any condition on foreign companies to conduct joint ventures with their local counterparts.

He also said that the government had no plans to fix the quota for local companies keen to be involved in the MSC.

"We are entering into the IT which is something new and we cannot have this and that restriction. That (restriction) will come later when we have realised the MSC," he said.

The Prime Minister said the government would study a national policy to provide opportunities to local companies to participate after it was found that the MSC could be extended throughout the country.

"The MSC is an experiment or to test the platform to enter the IT industry," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said the local companies would have to compete with multinational companies "because if we start limiting, we will obstruct the best technologies from coming in".

Dr Mahathir said foreign companies would be allowed to bring in experts and workers skilled in the IT without any limitations.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said he was satisfied with the progress of the MSC.

The Prime Minister also said he was recently briefed on the progress made in the implementation of the "electronic government" concept in which the "electronic kiosk", with functions similar to those of automated teller

machines, would be introduced.

"People having dealings with the government need not go to the counter and meet the officer. He can go to the kiosk and input the necessary data and then verify them," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said he would be leaving for Tokyo soon for an official visit at the invitation of his Japanese counterpart, Ryutaro Hashimoto. -- BERNAMA

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