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PM-Multimedia (Special Report)

PM'S PROMOTION OF MSC INITIATIVE GETS POSITIVE RESPONSE

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SANTA CLARA (California), Jan 18 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to California this week could well prove to be a watershed in Malaysia's progress towards Vision 2020 and bodes to irrevocably change the way of life for Malaysians.

It has been a week in which the Prime Minister has enthusiastically and eloquently propounded the country's drive to modify its strategy to move into the Information Age through the development of multimedia industries.

For Malaysians, the change was heralded in Dr Mahathir's New Year message just over two weeks ago when he devoted the major part of his speech to the imperatives for the country to go higher tech in its drive to achieve developed country status by 2020.

For his target audiences here in California, his pitch to get their help to give a boost to the development of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) has been an eye-opener in terms of its comprehensiveness, attractiveness and viability.

Their response has been most positive, especially here in the Silicon Valley, the world's leading concentration of high-technology companies, especially those in multimedia and knowledge-based industries which Malaysia wants to set up base in the MSC.

For many Malaysians, conditioned to associating (wrongly) that Vision 2020 is to make Malaysia an industrialised country, it should now be clear that the country is aiming much higher, in fact for an economy where services will be the biggest sector of the economy, ahead of manufacturing.

Although the MSC at present still involves the building of billion of ringgit worth of infrastructure, notably the new airport, express rail link, Putra Jaya and the adjoining Cyber Jaya for the private sector, its first batch of "flagship applications" will largely involve "brain-powered" activities.

These applications include such projects as electronic government, smart schools, telemedicine, research and development clusters, the national multipurpose card and borderless marketing.

And that's only the first phase. The second phase will involve linking the MSC -- a 50km-by-15km global testbed -- with other islands of excellence and phase three will see the whole of Malaysia leapfrogging into the Information Age with the entire country "living and working in these new ways".

Dr Mahathir has been busy here, first in Los Angeles to address mainly those in the entertainment industry centred on Hollywood, and from Wednesday here in the Silicon Valley to talk to leaders of many of the top American hardware and software companies.

Just as he launched a then commodities-based Malaysia full speed ahead towards industrialisation in the eighties, Dr Mahathir is now seeking to catapult the nation to what he describes as "the full promise of the Information Age".

In another visionary move, he is seeing earlier than most that global forces are sweeping nations towards a digital era characterised by the convergence of computers, information and entertainment and all the ways it will impact on the way people live, learn, work and play.

As Dr Mahathir himself puts it, the success of a country depends on its ability to adopt and adapt to global forces and "visionary countries can choose to create value rather than merely struggle to make the most out of

existing circumstances".

He has been busy here trying to help Malaysia adopt the best that's available from the top hardware, software and entertainment companies by getting them to advise and invest in the MSC. For Malaysians, exciting times are ahead as they learn to adapt. -- BERNAMA

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