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Mahathir-MSD

BEING SMALL IS NO IMPEDIMENT TO PARTICIPATING IN MSC, SAYS PM

By: Yong Soo Heong

HANNOVER, March 22 (Bernama) -- Even if you are small, you can still participate in the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) provided that you conform with the objectives of the project.

This was the message given by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to a broad spectrum of the German information technology (IT) companies here at CeBit 98, the world's biggest IT fair.

The prime minister, who wrapped up his promotion of the MSC initiative on Saturday, had told the would-be investors that the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC) could not afford to ignore anyone.

"You know that in this business people may start in a garage but you will never know how big they are going to be in the next 10 years. Microsoft is one good example. We cannot afford to ignore anybody," he said.

The prime minister told a packed audience at CeBit 98 on Friday that if the small companies did come with ideas which were compatible with the MSC's objectives, they would be accepted.

"We are not going to ask them how much capital they have and the size of their staff and so forth. But if they conform with the requirements of the MSC, we would like them to come in. We are quite sure that they will be able to develop their full potential at the MSC," he said.

Later, Dr Mahathir told Malaysian journalists that an increasing number of German IT firms have become interested in the MSC project.

For instance, he said an official of an industry group representing about 1,000 small- and medium-scale IT companies in Germany had requested that the MDC be engaged in a constant contact with the group to disseminate relevant information which would be of interest to the companies.

Dr Mahathir, who took the opportunity to visit several stands at CeBit 98 on Friday and Saturday, had admitted that European participation in the MSC project was rather low at 12 per cent.

He said the relatively low participation could probably be due to the fact that many of them were still not aware of the project.

But he said this was being addressed by the MDC in its push to have more European, particularly German, participation.

The big German IT companies like Siemens already knew about the MSC and had already come in, he said.

Physically, the MSC is a dedicated area for information technology and multimedia operations measuring 15 km by 50 km and runs from the Petronas Twin Towers to the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

But as for its activities, Dr Mahathir said the MSC would be a place of inquiry and intellectual curiosity and global hi-tech test-bed where new multimedia technologies could be spawned and tried out for the new age communications industry without any limitations.

The MSC will also be more business-oriented in developing practical multimedia applications for commerce and to meet the business and personal needs of the 21st century knowledge worker.

During his three-day visit, Dr Mahathir met 30 chief executives of 30 top German multimedia and IT companies and delivered a keynote address at the MSC Investors Conference.

He also spoke about the South East Asian economic crisis at the Malaysian German Business Forum and held bilateral talks with German Chancellor Dr Helmut Kohl.

The prime minister also witnessed a signing of an agreement between MEITECH Development Sdn Bhd, a wholly-owned investment subsidiary of MDC, and Remote Source Lighting International Inc (RSLI), an optical technology and fibre-optic lighting pioneer from the United States, for a US\$50 million joint venture to produce fibre optic lighting and display products.

These products are used as an economical alternative to traditional lighting for architectural, industrial, commercial, entertainment and signage applications.

Meanwhile, MDC officials will be here until the CeBit 98 fair ends on Wednesday to promote greater awareness on the MSC. They will also be visiting several hi-tech companies including Krone in Berlin and Deutsche Telecoms' "Future Lab". -- BERNAMA

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