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Dr M: Malaysia willing to swap MSC information

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CYBERJAYA, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia is willing to exchange information and the results of experiments carried out at the Multimedia Super Corridor through contacts with other multimedia centres.

The Prime Minister said:

"We know we cannot be everything to everybody ... we are going to find other people doing things which we are not doing here that are useful to us."

He was asked whether Malaysia was willing to share its multimedia experiences with the rest of the world as a participant of the Roundtable on Electronic Communities in Asia.

Dr Mahathir had earlier delivered a keynote address at the roundtable, attended by 150 representatives from 120 Malaysian and international firms at the Palace of the Golden Horses Hotel.

It was organised by the London-based Economist Group.

On whether steps had been taken to minimise the risk of failures, Dr Mahathir said the idea of the MSC was to have experiments carried out in an isolated area.

He said if the experiments become too large or they failed, the effects of this would be confined within the MSC and would not affect the whole country.

"If it is good, then we will allow it to spread to the rest of the country."

He said the Government felt the idea of a test bed in a real life environment was very important because nobody could predict the ultimate effect of the MSC.

"A lot of people hardly understand what is going to be the effect of this very rapid, very massive dissemination of information."

It was therefore important to provide a safety net allowing failures to be dealt with, where it could be studied and the direction changed.

Dr Mahathir gave the example of the sheep clone, Dolly, in Scotland last year and asked what might happen to the whole world if it went into the business of cloning.

Another participant asked how the Malaysian Government planned to retain skills in the country to prevent foreign companies and large corporations from pinching very skilled Malaysians.

Dr Mahathir said this would be difficult because people were going to be more mobile and they would find other offers more attractive.

"We are already seeing a migration from the Government into the private sector and we will be seeing a lot of movements of people from Malaysia to other countries.

"I should think there will also be a lot of movements from other countries into Malaysia," he said, citing some Uzbeks working here, as an example.

"Once they are well off, these people are going to go back just as the Taiwanese and Koreans went back ... they went to America, worked, acquired skills, made a lot of money and they thought they should go back and do something in their own countries.

"We cannot actually control the movement of people now. In future, the countries of the world will be as multiracial as Malaysia is today.

"There will be no single ethnic country in the world, not even Japan, not even Korea."

Dr Mahathir also touched on the diffusion of technology through Malaysians who worked with foreign companies operating in the country.

"At the moment, there are now quite a lot of software companies in Malaysia which are already marketing their products worldwide and obviously this was not developed without contact with foreign companies."

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