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PM: MSC progressing well, not affected by economic woes

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Multimedia Super Corridor developments were progressing well and have not been affected by the current economic problems.

"What we are putting in are merely the infrastructure and basic facilities while the rest will be through investment on the part of the people who will take up space in the MSC."

He said this in reply to questions from newsmen after chairing the sixth National Information Technology Council meeting at the Prime Minister's Department.

However, Dr Mahathir said the council was not briefed on the development of the MSC at today's meeting, adding that there would be a briefing on the matter at a later date.

On the outcome of the meeting, he said the council received and deliberated on six reports submitted by the task force.

The reports are on People Development; Infrastructure Development; Application Development; Operationalising the Implementation of the National Information Technology Agenda and Demonstrator Applications; Report on Year 2000 problem; and, IT systems and Networking Integration.

Dr Mahathir also announced Malaysia's decision to host the World Bank Conference on Global Knowledge next year. The conference is aimed at creating a stable world system brought about by the changing political, economic and social structure.

Dr Mahathir said the Government and major companies were also tackling the Y2K or Millennium Bug which is a year 2000 software problem that refers to the inability of many computer systems to read the data correctly in the new millennium.

Dr Mahathir said the Government on its part had engaged experts to tackle the computer records in all its departments.

"However, we fear that the small and medium size industries are not focusing or doing anything about this. And if they don't, they are going to get into very serious trouble once we cross 1999 into 2000."

On the International Advisory Panel meeting in Cyberjaya on Feb 12 and 13, Dr Mahathir said 17 panel members had confirmed their attendance.

"Some have yet to confirm. We still have time, but we don't expect everybody to attend. IAP is a very big panel."

The panel has now expanded to 41, up from 29 when the first IAP meeting was held on Jan 16 last year at Stanford University in California.

Dr Mahathir said Microsoft chairman Bill Gates would not be attending the meeting but would be coming in March.

"I have just got a letter from Bill Gates, a very long letter. He wants to have a special session. That is okay by me."

On the austerity drive, Dr Mahathir said the people had responded very well.

"I would like to emphasise that we do not want the people not to spend money at all because then we will have problems with the business people.

"We don't want them to buy imported goods where local items are available."

On the reason for inviting IMF officials to the country when it did not intend to seek its assistance, Dr Mahathir said this would give him the opportunity to air his views on economic problems faced by Malaysia as well as by other countries.

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