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Gates has pledged 'maximum investment' in MSC: PM

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MICROSOFT chairman and chief executive officer Bill Gates has pledged "maximum investment" in the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) project, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

Gates, who was in Kuala Lumpur to meet Dr Mahathir, has also expressed interest in taking part in the country's education programmes especially in smart schools, universities and the training of Information Technology (IT) workers.

"He has given some money... however, I think he will go beyond that," Dr Mahathir said when asked how much Gates will invest in these programmes.

The Prime Minister spoke to reporters after both Gates and himself launched the Malaysian Young Programmers Club (MyPC) at the Prime Minister's Department yesterday. Microsoft will invest the equivalent of RM1 million in MyPC.

Gates, who sits on the MSC International Advisory Panel, earlier briefed the Malaysian Cabinet on the electronic government concept.

"He also briefed the Cabinet and myself on the Generic Office Environment (GOE). He is ready to cooperate and said that he will give maximum investment here both for the GOE as well as the MSC," Dr Mahathir said.

Asked if this meant that Gates will be coming to Malaysia more often, Dr Mahathir said: "Of course if the GOE goes to Microsoft, he is going to be here very often."

GOE is a Microsoft-proposed electronic government application, which in turn is one of seven flagship applications identified for the MSC.

On the implementation of the electronic government, Dr Mahathir said a careful evaluation will be made because the Government does not want to lock out people as a result of it.

"We asked (Gates) to give us a better and clearer explanation about what can be done because this is something new. Moreover, technology is changing very rapidly.

"If we are not careful, we may suddenly find ourselves unable to progress," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir said Gates also asked him if the economic crisis had any effects on the MSC.

"We told him that we have given MSC priority so it is not going to be affected," Dr Mahathir said.

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