

12 FEB 1998

Mahathir-MSC

MSC PROJECT WILL GO ON AS SCHEDULED, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

CYBERJAYA, Feb 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) project has progressed much faster than expected despite the financial and economic problems facing Malaysia.

He said there was no need to put the project on hold.

The MSC project, Dr Mahathir said, will go on as scheduled.

"In fact we (the MSC project) are a year ahead," he told a joint news conference with members of the International Advisory Panel (IAP) on the MSC here.

The Prime Minister had earlier chaired the second MSC IAP meeting here.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked if the MSC project would be put on hold owing to the financial crisis which has hit Malaysia and several other Asian nations.

He said the financial and economic problems have not affected the MSC.

"If there is any effect at all, it is to accelerate the project," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was not spending too much money on the project, saying that the provisions for the MSC have already been made much earlier.

He said much of the work and allocation for the project have also been done.

"A lot of the expenditure will be coming actually from the companies which will be investing in the MSC. So there is really no reason why we should put this project on hold," he said.

Asked by a reporter as to how many companies have put off their investment in the MSC (due to the financial crisis), Dr Mahathir said he was not aware of any.

"No, not that I know of. Do you have any information?," he asked the reporter.

On today's meeting, Dr Mahathir said it was very well attended which began with a briefing by the Multimedia Development Corporation Sdn Bhd (MDC) executive chairman and IAP secretary Tan Sri Dr Othman Yeop Abdullah.

A total of 25 information technology experts are attending the meeting which is being held just over a year since the first IAP meeting in California on Jan 16, last year.

Dr Mahathir said they discussed various subjects relating to the implementation and policies of the MSC.

"The discussions were very useful for us (Malaysia) and for the participants because they will get to know what is happening in the MSC," he said.

As for Maliyria, the Prime Minister said the meeting enabled the MDC and the government to learn the ideas, shortcomings and recommendations from the participants needed to make the MSC a success.

Dr Mahathir also said there was a proposal that a study on the MSC be undertaken for the benefit of other countries which were interested to embark on a project similar to the MSC.

Asked if the participants had expressed any concern over the MSC, Dr Mahathir said there were some worry because of the restrictions imposed by Malaysia on certain kind of information that might hinder the development of the MSC.

He said Malaysia has assured them that as far as the MSC was concerned,

that restrictions would not apply.

He said Malaysia would consider either to do away, modify or retain the restrictions as far as the MSC was concerned.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia has also assured MSC investors that some 7,000 graduates will be produced annually to cater for their needs while foreign knowledge workers would also be allowed to work here.

Dr Mahathir said the next IAP meeting might be held in a year's time "but if necessary, maybe earlier."

"As far as the MSC is concerned, we have full benefit (of the meeting). So we will have ample time to digest the results of the meeting," he added.

-- ERNAMA

ES RM