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`MSC not hampered by economic measures'

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The current economic situation and capital control measures taken by the Government have not hampered foreign investors' interest in the Multimedia Super Corridor, Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Leo Moggie said today.

"The MSC has continued to receive serious applications from foreign companies, with the latest being from three Taiwanese companies at the end of August and early this month."

Currently, 51 per cent of MSC-status companies were local while 49 per cent were foreign.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government's target of 200 MSC-status companies by the year 2000 would be surpassed as there were already 175 such companies with investments worth more than RM3 billion.

Of these, 109 companies were already in operation. A total of 242 companies had applied for MSC status.

"We welcome foreign companies, but unless local companies get themselves involved, the country will get no real long-term benefit from the project."

Moggie was speaking to reporters after witnessing the signing ceremony between the Multimedia University and Lucent Technologies to start an academic cooperation called the "Bell Labs Visiting Professorship Programme" at the university campus.

He said, however, with the completion of the MMU campus, one of the seven flagships of MSC which was scheduled next month would only be ready early next year.

However, he said the delay would not affect its academic programmes as classes had already commenced at its temporary campus in Bukit Beruang, Malacca.

Under the visiting professorship programme, Lucent, the 100th company to be awarded the MSC-status, will provide MMU with visiting professors from its research and development arm, Bell Laboratories to deliver university-level courses for a full academic year, starting Oct 19.

All courses offered will be jointly developed with Lucent and approved by the MMU's dean of engineering.

The planned courses will focus on wireless communications technologies, the internet, data networking and very large scale integration microelectronics.

Lucent president David J. Marinelli said the current economic situation has had no impact on the company's investment in the country as "unlike other foreign investors who invest money in the country, Lucent invests in people and technology".

"Our investment is really helping to enhance and expand Malaysia's pool of technical expertise and cultivate a new generation of world-class, multimedia engineers," he said.

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