

09/07/1998

RM600m more to develop Cyberjaya approved, says PM

Fadzil Ghazali

THE Government has approved an additional RM600 million for the development of Cyberjaya, the world's first intelligent city.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the new allocation, despite the present economic situation, reflects the Government's commitment towards placing Malaysia at the forefront of information technology (IT) and multimedia development.

The allocation is expected to be drawn from the RM5-billion Infrastructure Fund announced by Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim last week.

Cyberjaya is part of Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) project, a 750-sq km zone stretching from downtown Kuala Lumpur to the new airport in Sepang.

The MSC is envisaged to become a global hub for the development of multimedia products and services.

"The Government is fully committed to the development of the MSC... all the money we can afford will go into the project," he said when closing the Second MSC Conference, entitled "Positioning the Cyberpreneurs into the next millennium", in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Describing the MSC project as a logical progression after attaining industrialisation, the Prime Minister said in fact Malaysia has no choice but to go into IT and multimedia in a big way in view of rapid advances seen in the sector.

If Malaysians do not equip themselves for the development, they will be left behind, he told his audience of government officials and aspiring cyberpreneurs.

Dr Mahathir said the Government is tapping the country's capacity and resources to enable the people to go into high growth areas, in which Malaysians have the potential to master and excel.

"We are working with others (foreigners with the expertise) and at the same time learning from them," he added.

A great deal of keenness has been shown in the MSC and it is also evident that Malaysian companies' capability to use technology to develop new products is growing, Dr Mahathir noted.

"I hope they will soon be able to export the products to earn foreign exchange," he said.

The Prime Minister urged local small- and medium-scale IT companies to take advantage of the various incentives offered by the Government as well as the low cost of setting up base within the MSC.

During a question and answer session later, Dr Mahathir said he does not foresee people in the rural areas being left behind in Malaysia's push on this front.

"They will learn very quickly. Just like children, the rural people are eager to learn... they are quick to pick up new things," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the people must be patient if they are to reap the intended benefits from new technologies. Referring to the initial glitches experienced by the state-of the art Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang, he said: "KLIA is a typical example of bringing new technology to people who are used to old ways."

(END)