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Wafer plant proves critics wrong, says PM

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the proposed RM3.6 billion wafer fabrication plant currently being built in Sarawak serves as a "positive and successful" example of what can be achieved in Malaysia by way of international co-operation on large projects and foreign investments.

He said with the country's excellent infrastructure, business-friendly environment, natural wealth, and skilled labour, multi-national corporations had the resources necessary to achieve their goals.

"The process of instituting this project prove the negative media reports about Malaysia wrong."

"1st Silicon (Malaysia Sdn Bhd) has managed to raise substantial amounts of foreign capital to help finance this venture."

"There are potential equity partners from around the world supporting this project and several major industrial nations, including the United States, Germany, and Japan will be supplying technology, know-how and equipment for this state-of-the-art manufacturing facility.

"This is truly a commendable multi-national effort," Dr Mahathir said in his message in the souvenir programme for yesterday's signing ceremony between 1st Silicon and three organisations.

The ceremony was witnessed by Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud.

The state-of-the-art wafer fabrication facility is taking shape at the Sama Jaya Free Industrial Zone in Kuching, Sarawak, to capitalise on the fast expanding semiconductor market which is estimated to be of the order of US\$300 billion (RM1.14 trillion) in the next five years.

Construction on the 39-hectare site started in January this year and is scheduled for completion some time in August next year. Production is expected to follow immediately thereafter.

Dr Mahathir also congratulated the Sarawak State Government for implementing the project, and described the State's initiative as "courageous and visionary".

In his speech, Taib said he was grateful to the Federal Government for its support towards the project which would help the State take a big leap forward in developing its hi-tech industry.

"The emergence of 1st Silicon signals Sarawak's readiness to participate in the globalised world," said Taib.

When fully functional by the end of next year, the plant will be capable of producing up to 30,000 wafers a month.