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Mahathir-Media

MAHATHIR RAPS DETRACTORS OF HIGH-TECH PROJECTS

SHAH ALAM, Feb 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has strongly criticised the foreign media for questioning the government's investment in high-tech projects, such as the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) and Malaysia's ability make them successful.

Speaking at the opening of Ericsson Mobile Communications Sdn Bhd, near here, he said Malaysians have a proven ability to undertake any project successfully.

"The negative sentiments expressed about the MSC have been heard earlier on the national car project, the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the Kuala Lumpur City Centre and the currency controls that have rescued Malaysia from the Asian economic crisis.

"All these have proven to be successful. Is there is any reason to believe these naysayers now, when they have been wrong everytime in the past," he said.

Dr Mahathir said some of the detractors have called Cyberjaya a ghost town, although it was impossible to build an entire city in a few months.

"In Cyberjaya, we have built large buildings in months but not the entire city. This takes years," he said.

Cyberjaya is the world's first intelligent city being built within the MSC, a 750 sq km zone south of Kuala Lumpur designated as a hub for the development of multimedia products and services.

Dr Mahathir said that considerable progress had been made in Cyberjaya, developed at the site of the former Greenfields Estate, acquired just in 1997.

He said that the newly-completed Multimedia University already housed some 3,000 students and teaching staff from around the world.

By the end of the year, he said, schools and parks, among others, would be largely completed to complement the basic infrastructure which was ready since July last year.

"Importantly, all the office space under construction or completed are already fully tenanted," he said.

Some 100 MSC status companies were expected to move into Cyberjaya by September this year, he said.

The strength of the MSC is also derived from the diversity and breadth of companies which have obtained MSC status.

"While some target the global market, others aim to serve Asia and the region," he said.

The Prime Minister expressed confidence that Malaysians have a secure future in the knowledge economy largely due to the results achieved by the MSC today.

He said that the MSC project currently met all the major milestones set for it.

"We now have 300 MSC status companies including 34 web-shapers. These companies together have projected investments of RM3.4 billion in 1999 and employed over 14,000 knowledge workers," he said.

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