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MAHATHIR-MEDIA

PM TAKES TO TASK FOREIGN MEDIA CRITICAL OF M'YSIA'S HIGH-TECH PROJECTS

SHAH ALAM, Feb 21 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in a hard hitting speech today, took to task the foreign media for recently publishing articles critical of the government's investment in high-tech projects such as the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) and Malaysia's ability to succeed in them.

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

"The negative sentiment that has been 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 control measures that have rescued Malaysia from the Asian economic crisis.

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

Dr Mahathir also 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 stressed.

Dr Mahathir said that considerable progress has been made for Cyberjaya from the greenfields site acquired just in 1997.

He pointed out that the newly completed multimedia university already houses over 3,000 students and teaching staff from around the world.

By the end of the year, fast track completion of public amenities such as schools and parks would be largely completed to complement the basic infrastructure that was ready since July 1999.

"Importantly, all the office space under construction or completed is already fully tenanted," he said, adding that over 100 MSC status companies are expected to move into Cyberjaya by Sept 2000.

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 has 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.--BERNAMA

AD DVS/MR