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Govt identifying next MSC flagship applications: Dr M

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government is identifying the next flagship applications for the country's superhighway infrastructure, Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

He added that the Government will identify the new MSC flagship projects soon where foreign information technology (IT) companies including those from India, could participate.

Dr Mahathir said the MSC has progressed well, where some of its projects have taken off while some are being processed and refined.

"We are now in the second phase and we will identify new flagship projects. I'm sure there will be role for foreign companies like in the previous projects," he said during a joint-dialogue session at the Malaysia-India Business Forum in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Also present was his counterpart from India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who had earlier delivered a keynote address.

There are three phases of MSC development - covering 750 sq km area extending from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport to the Kuala Lumpur City Centre -which is expected to be fully implemented within 20 years.

Phase 1 involves attracting a core of world-class companies, launching seven flagship applications, putting in place cyberlaws and establishing Cyberjaya and Putrajaya as world-first intelligent cities.

The second phase involves linking the MSC to other cybercities in Malaysia and overseas, create a web of corridors and establish a second cluster of world-class companies.

The final phase will see Malaysia being transformed into a knowledge-based society with a cluster of intelligent cities linked to the global information superhighway.

During the tabling the Eighth Malaysia Plan (8MP,2001-2001) last month, Dr Mahathir said the second wave of flagship applications will focus on attracting leading edge technology developers, promoting transfer of technology, and research and development (R and D) activities.

The Government has also allocated RM1.8 billion under 8MP for the first flagship applications roll-out during the five-year period. Among others, the smart school concept will be extended to 8,000 schools and telehealth will be implemented at various health centres and rural clinics.

The Government had introduced the seven flagship applications to jumpstart the development of the MSC by providing business opportunities for the private sector.

Besides smart schools and telehealth; other flagship applications are electronic government; multi-purpose cards; R and D cluster; worldwide manufacturing web; and borderless marketing.

Dr Mahathir told the forum that the MSC also needs more participation from foreigners in terms of investment as well as more representatives from major software companies to sit in the MSC International Advisory Panel.

"I am sure with your (Indian) expertise, there is a role to play (in the MSC)," he said in response to a request from a delegate from the Indian private sector to participate actively in MSC projects.

Dr Mahathir noted that Indian software companies could transfer its technology to the MSC on content development, especially for the film industry.

He noted that there are currently many filming techniques which are

being developed including in India, where these new techniques do not require people to act in the film.

"We need that kind of research to be located at the MSC," he said.

He told some 800 forum participants that Malaysia believes in working with similar multimedia cities in other countries.

He said rather than being competitive, the high-tech cities could actually complement each other.

"The MSC can work with Indian's 'Silicon Valley'," he added. India's technology hubs include Hyderabad and Bangalore.

To another question from a participant from India, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia has made quite considerable achievements in urban and social development projects such as housing, retail, healthcare, sanitation and car parks.

He said the projects were implemented through Malaysia Incorporated concept where the public and private sectors work closely together.

"With this mindset, we made progress in infrastructure faster," he said.

By adopting the smart partnership spirit through Malaysia Inc, he said the civil servants are no longer confrontational towards the private sector and the approval process by the Government is expedited.

He said the civil servants know that they will benefit from the private sector's projects because when companies acquire profits from projects implementation, the Government will accumulate more revenue through corporate taxes and the civil servants will in turn get higher pay.

Besides creating jobs for the workers, gives more revenue to the Government and higher profit to the firms, he said the multiplier effect of the smart partnership benefits everybody.

Dr Mahathir also suggested that India emulate the concept, which was derived from Japan, so that the infrastructure and development projects in India can progress faster.

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