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Indian newspapers praise our infrastructure and success of MSC

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Senior Indian journalists covering Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to Malaysia were practically bowled over after seeing developments that have taken place here, one likening Kuala Lumpur to New York except that "all the modern infrastructure is brand new".

For starters, The Pioneer newspaper said, Kuala Lumpur has blossomed into an incredible metropolis.

"Multi-level flyovers criss-cross the city, elevated expressways blaze their way through the old, colonial portion, and skyscrapers are so numerous that occasionally one is misled into thinking this is New York except that they are all brand new. Kuala Lumpur boasts the world's tallest building, the Petronas Twin Towers, a splendid feat of architecture."

Despite a debilitating economic crisis that rocked the East Asian countries in 1997-98, Malaysia, the newspaper said, is on the verge of successfully completing the first phase of its cyber dream - the Multimedia Super Corridor.

A visit to the plush, e-connected and ecologically designed headquarters of the Multimedia Development Corporation was an eye-opener, it went on to say.

"Cyberjaya is a tale of a dream turning into reality, brick by brick, click by click, building by building, expressway by expressway," it said.

The Pioneer also noted that 429 companies have already located themselves in Cyberjaya against a target of 500 that was to be achieved by 2003.

Apart from cyber connectivity, the fascinating aspect of the MSC is the expressway network, the newspaper said.

"Everything is state-of-the-art in Cyberjaya, although the planning is meticulous enough to ensure that the green cover remains unscathed," it said.

India's top selling daily, The Times of India, highlighted the last-minute hitches that prevented the signing of an extradition treaty between both countries.

The signing would have facilitated getting Italian businessman Ottavio Quattrochi back to India to face trial in the Bofors pay-off case.

The official explanation for not signing the treaty now, the newspaper said was that such treaty negotiations involved a time consuming process.

"The domestic laws of both countries need to be reconciled. An extradition treaty also involves a number of agencies on both sides and thus it can get stuck at one agency or the other," it said.

The newspaper said the RM5.7 billion railway line barter deal signed by both countries hinged seriously on the question of import duty reduction by India on palm oil.

"The issue is far from being sorted out. All that India assured Malaysia is that it will look for a mutually acceptable solution given the tremendous domestic constraints," the newspaper said.

The news service said it was obvious from the MoU signed between Indian Railway Construction Company and Malaysian Transport Ministry that the counter trade deal would fall flat in case the import duty on palm oil is not reduced by India.

The Hindustan Times said India and Malaysia have agreed to hold regular consultations to forge a common approach to World Trade Organisation

issues.

Both the countries want the Uruguay round fully implemented and feel that contentious issues should be kept out of the WTO agenda.

India also hoped to have greater interaction with Asean through Malaysia. Malaysia is the country co-ordinator for India till 2003.

The newspaper said apart from the MoUs, direct banking ties were also discussed yesterday. "Bank of Baroda has been allowed to set up a branch in Malaysia, where no Indian bank now operates."

The Tribune reported Atal Behari as saying that no progress could be made on the Kashmir issue till Pakistan ceased aiding cross-border terrorism in India. This was conveyed to Dr Mahathir during the one-to-one meeting.

"He (Atal Behari) recalled that he had gone to Pakistan in the bus to Lahore two years ago in a bid to break the logjam which had blocked progress in relations between the two countries. And what did we get in return? Kargil."

The Deccan Herald highlighted Dr Mahathir's displeasure over the move by the Indian Government to hike import duty on palm oil.

The Newspaper Today highlighted Malaysia's stand on terrorism. It quoted Dr Mahathir as saying that Malaysia was opposed to all kinds of terrorism, including state terrorism.

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