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Mahathir-MSM

MSM NOT AFFECTED BY US ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN, SAYS MAHATHIR

CYBERJAYA, Sept 6 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the US economic slowdown has not affected the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) as testified by the increasing number of companies investing in the country's information and communication technology (ICT) and multimedia hub.

Speaking at a media conference at the end of the first of the three-day 5th MSC-International Advisory Panel (IAP) meeting here, the prime minister said the number of MSC-status companies now stood at 554, a figure which exceeded the target of 500 companies by 2003.

Of the 554, 46 are world-class companies.

The prime minister said demand for office space and communication facilities in MSC's intelligent city of Cyberjaya was also growing and the government was making provisions to meet the requirements.

"Investments are coming in. Admittedly, some of the investments, even by the big companies are quite small, but there are some big companies which have chosen MSC to be the centre for their operations worldwide," he said.

He was responding to questions on the implications of the slowdown in US economy on the MSC.

He cited the example of Shell, which had three centres in the world, namely The Hague, Houston and the MSC, which is also its biggest.

The MSC is a 750 sq km area from Kuala Lumpur to the KL International Airport in Sepang designated as a hub for the development of ICT and multimedia products and services.

Elaborating on the impact of the sluggish US economy, Dr Mahathir said this obviously saw less foreign direct investments coming into Malaysia but other countries in the region were also experiencing the same situation.

"We are big exporters to the US and that means it affects our economy, and when it affects our economy, it means that people are not doing so well here, who would otherwise be spending money on either new investments or expansion to their businesses," said Dr Mahathir.

He said MSC was also attracting interest from other parts of the world.

For instance, Syria had appointed Malaysia as consultant for a similar project to be undertaken in the West Asian country.

Dr Mahathir said other countries like Bahrain, Jordan and Singapore were also keen to learn more about Malaysia's other multimedia applications such as the "smartcard".

There were also expressions of interest by other parties in the country's electronic passport.

Dr Mahathir did not elaborate on who the parties were. "So, obviously we must be doing something right," he added.

At the start of the media conference, Dr Mahathir gave an overview of what transpired during today's proceedings.

Tonight, the prime minister hosted a dinner for the MSC-IAP delegates at Seri Perdana, his official residence, in nearby Putrajaya, the nation's new administrative capital.

-- BERNAMA

MAM FR SHY JK