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PM: Our bid to become IT hub will be realised soon

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CYBERJAYA, Fri. - Malaysia's aim of becoming an information technology hub will soon be realised given the increasing number of companies investing in the Multimedia Super Corridor, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the MSC, equipped with excellent infrastructure facilities, would be able to meet the needs of foreign companies setting up operations.

"We may not have a Bill Gates, but we certainly have excellent infrastructure facilities to service foreign companies setting up operations here.

"With the Multimedia University located here and more companies setting up in Cyberjaya, I am sure our dream of turning Malaysia into a premier IT hub will be realised," he said when launching AIC Corporation Berhad's new logo at the MMU.

Also present were Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, who is MMU Chancellor, and Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Amar Leo Moggie.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would continue to give priority to the development of multimedia.

(The MSC is a 750 square km zone south of Kuala Lumpur designated as a hub for the development of multimedia products and services).

Companies in the MSC are expected to invest about RM20 billion over the next five years and generate some 35,000 jobs.

The Government has invested RM14 billion to develop the 50km by 15km MSC.

As of October last year, 37 world-class companies had set up operations there. The Government expects to see 50 such companies in the area by 2003.

At present, there are about 362 MSC-status companies operating in the area.

Dr Mahathir said the business community was not only showing interest in the MSC, it had also invested time and money to make the corridor a success.

"You see plenty of construction activity going on... the MSC is not only seeing the construction of facilities for local companies, but also those of foreign firms and this shows their keen interest in the project," he said.

Dr Mahathir also called for a closer working relationship between local companies, the MMU and foreign players setting up operations in the MSC.

"The companies here should interact with the foreign business entities... we want close collaboration with them as we will need all the knowledge workers we can get," he said

He urged MMU to work to produce more knowledge workers.

"This has to be done as I believe MMU students will be much sought after by these companies. The industry will need more skilled workers and the MMU can help to provide manpower to these companies," he said

Dr Mahathir, on a lighter note, said he hoped these companies would not attract MMU teaching staff by offering them higher remuneration.

"I hope you (teaching staff) will resist these temptations. I have always believed that the best pay is job satisfaction.

"It makes you feel good... money can't buy everything. But for some

people, money is everything," he said.

The Prime Minister also virtually launched AIC's second RM20 million semi-conductor plant in Kulim, Kedah, and witnessed the signing of several MoUs between the company and other parties, including the MMU. AIC is involved in making integrated circuit chips.

On AIC, he said he was happy to see the progress of the company which was initially a component manufacturer for Proton but had now become a major multimedia player in the country.

"I have been watching AIC since its early days. For a Bumiputera company, it has made quite an achievement," he said.

Dr Mahathir said RM20 million may mean nothing to someone like Bill Gates but to him, it meant much more because it was invested by a Malaysian company.

He also witnessed the signing of an MoU between the MMU and AIC Corporation for the setting up of the AIC Chair of Microelectronics at MMU's Faculty of Engineering. Under the agreement, the company will provide funding worth RM2 million over a period of five years.

Later, Dr Mahathir had a two-hour closed-door dialogue with some 1,000 MMU students.

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