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Thumbs-up for the MSC

DESPITE scepticism from doomsayers about the Multimedia Super Corridor when it was established five years ago, Malaysia's silicon hub is growing and gaining in stature. It is "healthy and doing very well", is the latest status update from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the driving force behind the conception of the MSC and the country's quest for a knowledge-based economy. Despite the slowdown in the United States economy, investments, albeit small, are still flowing in. This is most encouraging. It is also satisfying to note that some of the world's information technology luminaries have stepped into our corridor.

Of the 554 companies - our target was only 500 by 2003 - accorded MSC status, 46 of them are world class. It is hoped that more top-notch technopreneurs will knock on our doors. We must therefore continue with efforts to build a conducive environment. We must ensure stability and provide incentives to attract investors. Equally important is strengthening our capability to innovate, adapt and create indigenous technology to sharpen our competitive edge. As Intel Corporation executive vice-president and director Michael Splinter says, the MSC is a real success story that has to be told to the world for the Government has put in place the necessary infrastructure to ensure the project's success. But we are not resting on our laurels. Some countries are asking us to help them set up projects similar to the MSC.

Members of the MSC International Advisory Panel have given Malaysia the thumbs-up for being right on track to create a multimedia environment that will transform the country into a world-class IT hub. Going forward, we need a meeting of minds with these experts to share their ideas with us on developing further the MSC concept to put Malaysia in the mainsteam of activities necessary to attract knowledge workers, technopreneurs and high-tech industries. This will contribute significantly to employment and growth in the long term. To realise this, we need the MSC to be a global test-bed.

Those responsible for implementing policies must do their work with dedication and as a team to build on the progress and achievements that have been made. There is no place for indifference. For any venture to be successful, there must be ample funding which must be easily accessible to deserving candidates. This is important if we are to stay on top of the technology game. In this respect, we have little choice. We have to move with the times or be left behind in the endeavour to build a progressive and advanced country. For this reason, the authorities are trying to make funds easily accessible to MSC-status companies to support their growth.

Lack of funds will hamper their ability to pull in the professional manpower so essential in the industry. We must be mindful that we are competing with other international high-tech companies for skilled workers. These funds must therefore be disbursed quickly and efficiently.

We have come a long way in building the MSC and we have entered into strategic alliances with some of the world's leading companies. Red tape should not be allowed to stifle this progress. While IT is a fundamental enabling tool in accelerating growth, human capital remains the nucleus of a knowledge economy. To spur the MSC's potential, we have to attract top professionals and remain focused on our objectives.

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