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Moggie-Projects

MOGGIE SUGGESTS GERMAN PARTICIPATION IN M'SIA-CHINA INITIATIVES

By: Abdul Muin Abdul Majid

MUNICH, March 18 (Bernama) -- German companies should jump at the opportunity of working with Malaysia to tap the Malaysia-China joint initiatives involving major intra-regional projects, said Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Amar Leo Moggie.

He said that by showing strong economic performances, Malaysia and China were in good position to spearhead projects such as the Trans Asian Railway with plans for a fibre-optic link running all the way from Singapore, Malaysia, Indochina and all the way to Yunnan and the rest of China.

"German companies can benefit by collaborating with Malaysia to tap the Malaysia-China initiatives through this network," he said.

Moggie said this during a special presentation on opportunities for collaboration in information and communication technology (ICT) developments in Malaysia at the Malaysian-German Business Forum here Monday, held in conjunction with the official visit by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Germany.

He said that with all eyes now on the huge China market, Malaysia would be a natural springboard for German companies to tap the abundance of highly-skilled and multi-lingual ICT workers at competitive salaries.

Moggie said that examples of Western multinationals having Malaysian employees in their offices in China included Motorola, Ericsson, Schlumberger and Alcatel.

"Malaysia can also be used as a springboard to the rest of the Asia Pacific countries with most of whom we share common languages and cultural heritages," he said.

The forum, attended by more than 300 people including 200 members of the German business community, featured a keynote address by Dr Mahathir which carried the theme "Realising a Vision: The Malaysian Way".

Moggie provided participants with a background and an update on various ICT initiatives in Malaysia, particularly those under the ambitious Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) project, an area of 750 sq km south of the capital Kuala Lumpur which has been designated as a hub for the development of multimedia services and products.

The MSC, launched in August 1996, aims to drive the Malaysian economy to higher value-added activities through the wide usage and adoption of ICT.

Moggie said that the MSC had resulted in the rapid growth of the ICT sector in Malaysia and an indication of this was the number of Malaysian ICT small and medium enterprises (SMEs) alone had increased from barely 300 in 1997 to more than 1,650 today.

"These SMEs are important to us because they serve as the backbone of the Malaysian ICT industry," he said.

In addition, he said that German companies, in collaboration with Malaysian counterparts, should take advantage of new projects to be launched within the existing MSC flagship applications of electronic government, smart schools, multipurpose card, tele-health, borderless marketing centre, worldwide manufacturing web as well as research and development (R&D) clusters. A later inclusion is the technopreneur development flagship.

He said that the new projects would not only address the elements needed to roll out the flagship applications to the rest of Malaysia but

also introduce the latest and cutting-edge technologies.

"The new projects, which will be rolled out in phases, are also aimed at boosting other existing industries such as finance, manufacturing, transportation and tourism to a higher level of efficiency, productivity and competitiveness," he said.

They would also provide, he said, numerous business and research opportunities for entreprising and innovative companies and investors including SMEs.

"The reputation of German companies in high technology areas is world-renowned and we would like to invite you and your companies to participate in these new projects in collaboration with Malaysian companies," he said.

The minister said that German firms or investors were also welcome to set up their own incubator centres for start-up ICT companies in Malaysia which would be eligible for the MSC-status incentives.

In terms of technology focus, Moggie said that Malaysia was currently pursuing several cutting-edge technologies and would be keen to work with German organisations for mutual benefit.

These include in the fields of bio-informatics both in relation to health and agriculture, encryption and enhanced security technologies as well as design technology.

"German companies, especially here in Munich, are renowned for their expertise in design technology, for example in the design of automobiles. In this regard, Malaysia is keen to learn and work with German design centres," he added.

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