

06 SEP 2002  
Mahathir-IAP  
MSC ON TRACK, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

CYBERJAYA, Sept 6 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) initiative is proceeding well with a lot of progress made over the last year.

The prime minister said progress had also been made in areas which once looked impossible, including in the biotechnology field.

He said the success was evident from the many local and world-class companies which had set up their businesses in Cyberjaya, the hub of the MSC initiative.

Malaysia and the MSC had gained a lot from the MSC International Advisory (IAP) meetings, first held in 1997, he said at a news conference at the 6th MSC-IAP meeting at Cyberview Lodge, here.

"During the last one year, there has been a lot of progress made by the MSC as you can see from the number of buildings and the number of companies which have moved to Cyberjaya.

"I must say that up to this point, the MSC has developed well because of the contribution made by members of the IAP," he said.

The MSC is a 750 sq km area running south from the Kuala Lumpur City Centre to the KL International Airport which has been designated as a hub for the development of multimedia products and services.

There are now 745 MSC-status companies. The number of local companies granted MSC status stands at 495 and the MSC has attracted 53 world-class companies as well.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was not short of talents to work at the MSC, and in fact, with the local experts, the MSC was able to move into areas like biotechnology.

"One company is doing stem cell research and has already found application of stem cell for the purpose of HIV and Thalassaemia treatment.

"They are not going to clone human beings. But we are looking at the possibility of producing organs for transplantation...things like this are actually very exciting," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was not far behind the advanced countries in this field of biotechnology research and the MSC played an important part in achieving the knowledge-base economy.

"I expect in future there will be more new ideas which will help push Malaysia towards the target of achieving a knowledge-based economy.

Dr Mahathir said the MSC had been able to produce local talents capable of producing 3D animation and new applications of IT for government and small businesses.

"It looks so real that I thought my seat was moving but actually the picture was," Dr Mahathir said in reference to his visit to the MSC Virtual Reality Centre here this morning

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would study all alternative systems, including the open source system, to see which one would benefit the country in the long run.

"We need to examine all alternative systems in order to serve our purpose and (see) which (one) brings down the cost and provides a lot of advantage to us. We are prepared to test any system," he said when asked whether the government would implement the open source system which means access to the source code.

Through the open source system, a programmer could read, redistribute and modify the source code of a software.

To a suggestion by the the managing director of Cutler & Company, Dr Terry Cutler, who is a member of the IAP, that the IAP's name be changed to International Collaboration Panel because a lot of collaboration were taking place among the members, Dr Mahathir said: "We will look into the possibility."

Replying to a question, the prime minister said that there had been a lot of changes in the thinking of the younger generation regarding information technology.

"So there is change...change for the better, I think. We should learn how to accept the change and how to deal with children whose thinking and way of doing things will be very much different from that of the older generation.

Dr Mahathir also said that the IAP members had contributed a lot to the development of the MSC by providing constructive views and suggestions.

"By coming here, they realise that this is not just an empty dream but this is something we are serious about and they are very willing to contribute towards making the MSC a reality. Of course the ideas they had given us, like how to proceed, what kind of people need to be trained...all these things are the result of listening to them during the process of IAP conferences," he said.

Dr Mahathir was also asked how he would like to contribute to the MSC development and whether he would remain the chairman of the IAP after his retirement in October 2003.

"I don't think I should stay as the chairman ... (but) if I am allowed, I will sit in and listen to discussions and if I am allowed, I will give some of my views," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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