

06 SEP 2002

MAHATHIR-IAP

SMALL SCALE MSC-STATUS COMPANIES CAN ALSO CONTRIBUTE IDEAS, SAYS

MAHATHIR

CYBERJAYA, Sept 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government welcomes all parties, including small scale MSC-status companies, to put forward their ideas and bid for contracts for the advancement of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) initiatives.

Speaking at a press conference at the 6th MSC-International Advisory Panel (IAP) meeting here today, he said that the government is open to any proposals coming even from small companies provided they have the capacity to execute the ideas.

Dr Mahathir, who is the IAP chairman, said these companies were free to make bids (for contracts) but due consideration would be based on their capabilities and relevant expertise.

"We are open to any proposals, coming from smaller companies, (but) at the same time, of course, they (the small companies) have (bid for contracts) that is within their capacity. They are entitled to make bids for contracts, they are not in any way excluded," said Dr Mahathir.

The prime minister said that the government would definitely give due consideration to parties which have the capacity to provide the answers to some of the problems which the government was facing now.

".. and it is not a question of knowing (people) because they may have known the wrong people," he said in responding to a question on whether the government would give a fair chance for small-scale companies to participate and bid for MSC-related contracts.

The MSC is a 750sq 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.

Asked why some leading business entities in Malaysia were hesitating in supporting the MSC initiatives, Dr Mahathir said that the government was not against them and has in fact tried to attract them to join the MSC initiatives.

"It depends on what they (these companies) want to do. It is entirely up to them to choose, but we are not against them, in fact we have tried to attract them," he said.

He noted that there were still many Malaysian companies which failed to see the potential of information technology (IT) in improving their business operations.

Dr Mahathir said that the MSC initiatives were progressing well. He acknowledged the IAP members' contribution in making the project possible.

As for setback faced in implementing MSC projects, such as the slow progress of the entertainment village or e-village project, Dr Mahathir said that the government was finding ways to address this issue.

The e-village project forms part of the MSC initiatives to develop capabilities in the areas of electronic content, multimedia, education, eco-tourism, electronic arts and animation industry.

Dr Mahathir explained that the previous developer of e-village did not realise how much capital was required for the project.

Half way through, the company ran short of cash and was not able to pay its contractors, he added.

The previous master developer of the project, Entertainment Village Sdn Bhd (EVSB), has faced financial constraint, prompting Multimedia Development Corporation Sdn Bhd (the MSC promoter) to step in and extend payments to the tune of RM31.6 million in March this year to EVSB's

creditors.

"We are working on another investor to come in but there are still problems. But I believe that we could get around that," the prime minister said.

The second day of the MSC-IAP meeting today would see the prime minister on a one-on-one meeting with IAP members and representatives.

Among the topics discussed at the meeting are the role of IT companies in supporting the emerging economies towards narrowing the digital gap, post dot com entrepreneurship, open source system, information security including cyberlaw, information superiority and combatting harmful Internet content.

As at August 2002, there are 745 MSC status companies including 495 local companies. -- BERNAMA

WNZ MAD FR