

05 SEP 2003

MAHATHIR-MSC

SECOND PHASE OF MSC TO INCREASE INCOME OF M'SIANS

CYBERJAYA, Sept 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the second phase of the development of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) is expected to increase the income of Malaysians particularly those who participate more competitively with knowledge-based skills.

"By training our people and creating opportunities for them to work in higher paid jobs, the MSC would then contribute towards the progress of the country and help make it a developed country," Dr Mahathir told a press conference at the MSC 7th International Advisory Panel (IAP) meeting here today.

"That's the way we go, we cannot increase our pay simply by going on strike and demanding higher wages, but that's not going to last very long. we will lose our competitive edge," he added.

In the second phase (2003-2010), the MSC will be linked to other global cybercities to create a web of corridors, set global standard in flagship applications and harmonise global framework of cyberlaws.

Citing work opportunities and availability, he said, "We can do with a lot more jobs because we have the manpower. Immigrant workers will be doing most of the low paid jobs but for the better paid jobs we want to see Malaysians."

However, he said, Malaysians have to accept that they must be trained and disciplined and be very competent and they have the capacity to do all those things as you know Malaysia Boleh.

Asked whether the second phase of MSC would introduce new areas besides the existing ones, Dr Mahathir said, "That is what the IAP is all about. There are views from the members. We will study the advice. We will try to include them in the second phase."

The seventh MSC-IAP talks held in Cyberjaya are attended by 31 panel members and representatives from Silicon Graphics Inc, Siemens Information & Communication Network and Ericsson.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said that he was satisfied with the progress made in the first phase of MSC mainly on the participation of companies which had exceeded earlier expectations.

"We had targetted for 500 companies by the end of 2003 but we have now 920 companies. We needed 30 world class companies for 2003 and now we have well over 50," he said.

In driving home his point, he said, "It is quite obvious. You have to look around and see where there were only palm trees before, now you are seeing beautiful buildings which are not empty but full of people working in there. That was exactly what we expected," he quipped.

For the last seven years, apart from attracting a core group of world-class companies into the MSC, Malaysia has launched seven Flagship Applications, put in place a world-leading framework of cyberlaws and established Cyberjaya and Putrajaya as one of the world's leading intelligent cities.

Accordingly, Dr Mahathir calls on strong collaboration between the industry and the university as he said, "The result from the research would be much more relevant and applicable in businesses."

He added that with close collaboration the researcher were given their freedom to work independently.

"We need to be relaxed a little bit on our rules and regulation

governing the university as well as the use of government funds for research and development," the Prime Minister said.

When asked whether he would play an advisory role for the development of MSC, after his retirement, Dr Mahathir said, " You have to ask the man who is going to be the new prime minister. As far as I am concerned, if there is anything that I can do to help, I would like to contribute."

On another note, Dr Mahathir said the MSC had contributed much to the economy.

"Employment has gone up and we have knowledge workers. They are highly paid workers so we are creating jobs for the people who are better trained and that is the plan which we want to follow," he added.

This year, a total of 21,102 job opportunities are expected to be created within the MSC of which 17,369 or 82 percent will be for knowledge workers. This will represent an almost 10-fold increase from the 2,190 jobs and 1,946 knowledge workers positions on offer in 1997.

The total sales of MSC status companies had risen from RM3.93 billion in 2002 to an estimated RM5.83 billion this year. In 2004, total sales are expected to increase to RM7.98 billion with export estimated to rise to RM1.82 billion.

At the press conference, Dr Mahathir took the opportunity to thank the IAP member for their views and advices to progress the MSC.

"On behalf of the government of Malaysia , I would like to publicly thank the members of IAP and other collaborators for their willingness to spend their valuable time here in order to advise and help us to progress the MSC," he said.

"Obviously their participation has been very fruitful otherwise we would not achieve what we have achieved today," Dr Mahathir said. --

BERNAMA

MAS SM KTC