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Global demand for MM Chip, says Dr M

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there has been much progress with the development of the Malaysia Microchip (MM Chip), which had attracted a lot of demand due to its advanced technology.

Last September, Malaysia acquired the property rights to the MM Chip, the most advanced microchip in the world.

The MM Chip measures 0.25 sq mm - about the size of a decimal point - and can be embedded in paper.

It can be used as a replacement for barcode tags on retail goods, for differentiating between genuine and counterfeit currency notes, and for use in passports.

The chip is produced in Japan but will be manufactured in Malaysia later this year at Silterra Malaysia Sdn Bhd, a semiconductor manufacturer based in the Kulim Technology Park.

Speaking at a Press conference on the MM Chip at a hotel here, Dr Mahathir said Silterra, which produces the microchips, would first have to invest in a new production line as the company was now "100 per cent utilised".

Also present at the Press conference were Malaysia Microchip Committee chairman Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim, FEC (M) Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Kuniko Ichioka and FEC managing director Maj-Gen (Rtd) Datuk Gopal Ramdas.

FEC Inc is the Japanese research and development company which designed the chip, and FEC Malaysia is a 50-50 joint venture between the Malaysian Government and FEC Inc.

Ichioka said countries like China, Taiwan, the United States, Canada and Australia had already expressed interest in using the chip for various applications, such as for identification documents or election cards.

"One of our aims is to bring the profit to Malaysia, and we would like to work with Malaysian companies. So we are hoping that besides Iris (Corp Bhd), other local companies will work together with us," he said.

The Government is co-operating with Iris, developer of the MyKad and e-passport, on applications for the chip and is currently discussing with various ministries on how it can be utilised.

"Response has been very encouraging ... There is no question of going back as we are convinced that this is the future," Rais said.

Currently the FEC is doing evaluation tests for the MM Chip and the engineering sample is scheduled to be completed in April.