

16/01/1997

PM: Multimedia nation by 2020 (HL)

Mustapha Kamil in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES, Wed: The implementation of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) is only the beginning as the Government plans to turn the whole country into a multimedia corridor by the year 2020.

Outlining plans for the MSC and the nation, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the entire project to turn Malaysia into a multimedia hub will be undertaken in three stages.

In the first phase, Malaysians will learn from their international partners operating in the MSC, a 15km-by-50km area covering the Kuala Lumpur City Centre, Putrajaya and the new KL International Airport in Sepang (KLIA).

The second phase will see the linking up of the MSC with "other islands of excellence" within the country.

Finally, the entire nation will be transformed into a multimedia super corridor, the Prime Minister told a gathering of Beverly Hills entertainment and community leaders here on Tuesday.

The Multimedia Development Corp (MDC), a one-stop centre for coordinating the project, will open 10 offices around the world over the next two years to be near the MSC's clients.

The MDC's activities are overseen personally by Dr Mahathir, and Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

At a press conference at the University of California, Los Angeles, Dr Mahathir said the Government is aiming to get the relevant cyberlaws enacted before year-end.

On the protection of property rights, he said Malaysia will not only enact laws but also ensure strong enforcement. He acknowledged, however, the difficulties in totally stamping out piracy.

On a regional basis, he said Malaysia will bring up issues related to software piracy at the next Asean ministerial meeting.

Addressing potential investors later, Dr Mahathir said seven pilot applications will first be promoted within the MSC to spearhead the project's development.

Malaysians will be issued the world's first multi-purpose smart card which incorporates an individual's identification data, electronic signature and provide him with access to government, banking, credit, telephone, transport and club services.

The country will also pioneer the implementation of an electronic government where the multimedia-networked paperless administration centre of Putrajaya will be linked to other government centres nationwide.

This will start with the Prime Minister's Office, when it moves to the new administrative centre next year, followed later by other ministries as they relocate to Putrajaya.

The Prime Minister also mentioned Malaysia's on-going plans to develop a comprehensive programme for smart schools.

All schools will be linked to the Internet by the turn of the century while a new curriculum is being developed and teachers re-trained, he said.

On the multimedia university planned for the MSC, Dr Mahathir said it will facilitate the creation of the right workforce as well as a collaborative cluster of academic and corporate research and development centres.

In addition, Malaysia will introduce telemedicine which will see, among

other things, electronic data exchange between local medical facilities and their counterparts from all over the world.

The MSC is also geared towards becoming a remote manufacturing coordination and engineering support web that will electronically enable companies in high-cost countries to access plants across Malaysia and Asia as "virtual" extensions of their domestic operations.

The MSC will also be turned into a marketing and multimedia customer service centre for electronic publishing, content localisation, telemarketing and remote customer care for a market of some 2.5 billion people.

Over time, the Prime Minister said, these applications will generate a multitude of webs to form an overall MSC web that is linked to other parts of the world.

On why international companies should consider investing in the MSC, he said apart from being stable and economically competitive, the nation has the political will to ensure the project's success. The Government, he added, will not allow excessive politicking to curb its plans for development.

The MSC stands out among similar projects in the world in that it does not involve adding to or upgrading existing facilities. Instead, it is being developed from scratch, with brand new buildings and the latest in infrastructure facilities.

In noting the rapid and far-reaching changes that advancements in technology has brought to the world, the Prime Minister said information technology in particular has effectively served to remove international borders, and countries and companies willing to adapt to this new development will reap the benefits.