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Software firms told to tie up with foreign concerns

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Malaysian software companies should merge or enter into joint ventures with major international telecommunications companies to capture markets within the Asian region.

This way local entrepreneurs can maintain a competitive edge and face future challenges within the information technology industry, once global trade is liberalised in the next millennium.

It is time to look at the reality of the country's Multimedia Super Corridor project, its opportunities and "what it means to business", said Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed.

He was launching the Alta Vista Asia-Wide Mirror Site by Alam Teknokrat Sdn Bhd and Digital Equipment (M) Sdn Bhd at the Legend Hotel today.

"The MSC's flagship applications can improve administrative systems and enhance a company's efficiency and productivity," he said.

The MSC is a platform, said Mustapa, for small-and-medium sized Malaysian companies to seek partnerships with other corporations.

"These companies should exploit the opportunities that the MSC has to offer for their own advantage. Our corporate sector is only now beginning to realise the MSC's potential," he said.

At the same ceremony an Internet News Service Agreement was signed between Alam Teknokrat Sdn Bhd and Bernama.

This will enable Internet users to obtain the latest on-line news update through the website which is connected to a language base search capability in Asian languages. It can be accessed via <http://altavista.skali.com.my>

Present at the ceremony were the chief executive officer of Alam Teknokrat Hisham Isa, the chief executive officer of Digital Equipment Graeme Shorter and Bernama general manager Mohamad Raus Borhan.

Mustapa said the local business community was quite slow in linking up to the Internet or any other mechanisms or databases with the MSC's agenda.

"We need to close the gap between the lower-end users and the high-technology providers.

"While our Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is promoting the MSC overseas, we must not forget to prepare our local business community to face all eventualities when global trade is liberalised," he said.

Mustapa said small and medium-scale businesses should realise the importance of adapting to technological changes to compete with international IT providers.

"By exploiting the opportunities offered by the MSC, local companies can prepare themselves to maintain a competitive edge and later provide innovative and advanced telecommunications services to the region."

Earlier, Shorter said his company had several proposals which were very "fitting and beneficial" for the MSC.

"We want to initiate direct action towards the MSC and have a wide range of programmes which we need to discuss with the MSC Corporation.

"We are linked to Microsoft Corporation and also have several partners to test the benchmarking standards. We also have strong relationship with software manufacturers especially in the medical and health areas.

"Our company can also provide independent networks for switching Internet access," he said.

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