

22/05/1997

Spin web of alliance, Dr M urges companies

Ahmad Talib; Rashid Yusof in London

COMPANIES taking part in the Multimedia Super Corridor investors' conference responded positively and enthusiastically to the third roadshow led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Tuesday.

Dr Mahathir, in his keynote address, said companies worldwide should spin a web of alliance which would link them closer together and this would help eliminate conflicts and pave the way for a more meaningful interdependence.

"It is excellent ... I'm going to Malaysia next month," said Roger Wallhouse, director of Northern Europe operations of SMS, a company which provides computer systems for health care, as he hurriedly left the packed hall.

He had just heard a sleek, high-profile briefing on the MSC which made its debut on Europe on Tuesday.

It was a sneak preview of the Malaysian version of how breathtaking changes in business, information, and communication will be in the new millennium, the likes of the multimedia universities and the 12 intelligent cities which Malaysia ultimately hopes to develop.

The platform for the futuristic MSC presentation was the laid-back ambience of London's Imperial College established at the turn of the century.

The 1,000 participants heard Dr Mahathir dissected realities the world will have to reconcile itself with, in his usual candid manner, and some witticism like "should we eliminate the bad elements from the Internet, there will be no Sussex, Middlesex ...".

Delegates came away impressed. "It is fascinating," said Patrick De Beer, London correspondent for the famous French daily, Le Monde.

De Beer, who was a junior French diplomat in Kuala Lumpur in the late 1960s when the capital was a "big village", said the MSC was a global concept which brought together everyone.

Some of the delegates were already making preparations to locate their operations at the MSC. "We are very interested in the smart card idea as we are a world leader in this," said the Malaysian general manager of Gemplus Technologies Asia Pte Ltd.

He said the company was working to incorporate personal identification, health care, driving licence, and payment functions in smart card.

Welsh Development Agency chairman David Rowe-Beddoe, speaking via a video link from Cardiff, described the MSC as the "best and boldest" project in the world.

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