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Companies urged to make use of facilities in MSC

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday called on local companies to use the opportunities provided by the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) to test their capabilities in the information technology sector.

Local companies, he said, should make use of the infrastructure available in the MSC area to test the development and design in their work before promoting and selling them worldwide.

He said many local companies which displayed "extraordinary" capabilities have also set up laboratories in the country.

"It is the Government's hope that the facilities in the MSC will be used by local companies to test their products before launching them worldwide," he said when launching Metrovision's News on the Internet.

Broadcasting companies, he said, should not be afraid when rival companies follow their footsteps as the healthy competition is good to develop an efficient market.

Dr Mahathir also commended Metrovision on its effort to provide free information on the Internet as it will enable Malaysians overseas to obtain accurate information of happenings in the country.

The news, which is provided free, will also help reduce Government's allocation for the purchase of local newspapers.

"The facility provides for direct information to reach their target audience. This is important as information, especially those on the Internet, can be accessed fast and is difficult to control," he added.

Dr Mahathir also said the probability of misleading information will also be lesser if the sources are well-known and established, adding that the public will be able to benefit from the exchanges of information from a well-established source.

This is particularly useful when Malaysians are overseas.

Metrovision's News on the Internet features the daily Bahasa Malaysia news bulletin and late night English news bulletin. Both bulletins will be archived up to a week to allow users to access them at will.

The information available through text or audio visual format can be access 45 minutes after the screening of the programme on television.

The new medium of television news is a joint cooperation between Metrovision, which provides the content, and Perwinas Telecommunication Sdn Bhd, which is the tool provider.

The broadcast company also plans to develop other programmes for the website such as quizzes, Merdeka Parade and the 16th Commonwealth Games.

Metrovision's News on the Internet is also part of the company's plans to strengthen the convergence of the multimedia. The next step will involve the provision of distance learning using the Internet.

"We are still in discussions with local universities to provide the content in line with the development of the multimedia applications," Metrovision managing director Sabri Rahman said.

The distance learning programme which is expected to take off in 1999 will involve popular courses such as business management, accounting, public administration and Information Technology and computing.

On advertising, Metrovision is targeting at 500 advertisers by the end of these year. Currently, seven companies are advertising on the Metrovision's News on the Internet.

Sabri said the rates will be between RM10,000 and RM15,000 per year and

advertisers' banners will be arranged in a loop format which average 50 times an hour. Last month, the company recorded 5,000 hits per day and is confident of getting one million hits per day.

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