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PM foresees nation as one big MSC by 2020

A. Kadir Jasin in Hannover (Germany)

PRIME MINISTER Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday envisaged the whole of Malaysia becoming a multimedia super corridor by the year 2020, the deadline for the nation to achieve the developed nation status.

At that point of time, he said, a total of at least 12 intelligent cities would be linked to the global information superhighway, thus becoming a conduit to all the other intelligent cities worldwide.

By then, Dr Mahathir told the MSC investors conference at the CeBIT '98 exhibition here, participation in the MSC would have risen to 500 world-class enterprises.

"It will even have a Cyber Court of Justice," he told the participants.

Dr Mahathir said, besides becoming a test-bed for new technologies, the MSC would help to develop and influence the new culture of global information.

In the process it must grapple with the conflict between control and licence, and offsetting the adverse social effects of a massive unremitting onslaught of instant, uncensored information.

"What we are offering may not be new in technological terms but we believe this initiative is organised on a scale, and is of a comprehensiveness, hitherto unrivalled," Dr Mahathir said.

He said Malaysia was taking a pragmatic approach to enter the information age and realised that an IT agenda was sine qua non to realising the goal of becoming a fully developed nation by 2020.

With the manufacturing sector's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product expected to peak at 38 per cent by that year, he said Malaysia needed a second engine of growth and he believed this would come from a thriving IT and multimedia industry.

It would in turn fuel the productivity of other industrial sectors, he said.

He said although Malaysia was not on the forefront of technology, it hoped to use IT to replicate what the United States did with the Industrial Revolution.

"We have before us the example of Britain and the USA - one fathered the Industrial Revolution while the other brought it to full development," he said.

Referring to the MSC as a "green field" site, Dr Mahathir said America was one huge green field when it opened its doors to industrialisation by providing optimum conditions for technology and business to flourish to fulfil the promise of the Industrial Revolution.

"We have taken this model. In a modest way we, too, hope to assume a catalytic role. Our task will be to create an ideal environment for IT and multimedia, one which will encompass the physical, economic, regulatory and policy framework that will unleash the creative dynamics for innovation and advances in this field," he added.

The MSC would be a web of collaborating companies in the IT field - a multi-cultural web of mutually dependent national and international companies collaborating to deliver new products and services across Asia and beyond.

"And like a spider," said the Prime Minister, "it will weave ever more intricate webs of relationships and create synergies among participating companies. Such a web could be the new model of development for the information age."

Dr Mahathir told the audience that the MDC was currently evaluating several MSC status applications from German companies, and would talk to several more during this visit. MDC officers will also visit several sites in Germany.

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