

Creativity important to economic growth: PM

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysian companies have proven that even though they are relative latecomers in Information Technology (IT) and multimedia industries, they can still pull away from the pack.

He said the success of these companies and individuals demonstrate the importance of creativity and innovation in driving economic growth in the Information Age.

"Creativity is about seeing things from a different angle and breaking away from old rules and norms that bind us to the traditional way of doing things. It allows us to be different and helps us find new answers and solutions to problems, both old and new," Dr Mahathir said.

Speaking at the Asia Pacific Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) IT and Telecommunications Awards (APMITTA) in Kuala Lumpur last night, he said from creativity comes innovation, and it is from this realisation that the Government embarked on the creation of the MSC.

"Tonight is a special occasion where we unveil to the world the fruits of our labour for the last three-and-a-half years. The companies in the MSC have responded to the Government's call to invest in IT and multimedia. They have risen to the challenge with a glittering array of outstanding creative achievements," Dr Mahathir said.

He said these companies have displayed their creative capabilities and resourceful innovation in developing products and services in a variety of categories, ranging from software and content development to 3-D animation.

Dr Mahathir said it is crucial that elements of creativity and innovation fostered by investing heavily in R&D are further supported by venture capital funds to commercialise products and services of high quality and high value-added.

"In this regard, Malaysian companies and entrepreneurs should face up to

the challenge of thinking out of the box, so that traditional limit to growth can be overcome via more creative and innovative thinking as well as supportive funding arrangements," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the APMITTA will provide a platform for companies and individuals to participate and propel themselves in areas where Malaysia can become major players in IT and multimedia.

"I appeal to all IT and multimedia companies to support this programme. I hope that this initiative will eventually lead to the creation of a new generation of hi-tech start-ups and the establishment of many

more local companies that will join the ranks of world-class companies," he said.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said the Government has had full confidence in the soundness of the MSC concept ever since it was launched in August 1996, based on the experience of Silicon Valley and Route 128.

"I am happy to note that during the last three-and-a-half years, the MSC has made tremendous progress. The 306 companies awarded MSC-status and the nature and spread of their activities indicate the value and depth of the research in technologies and applications being developed. This

includes more than 147 wholly Malaysian-owned companies that are involved in high value-added activities," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the MSC is expected to create more than 35,000 jobs for knowledge workers in the next five years and attract at least 50 world-class companies by 2003 to set up value-added activities for the country and the region.

Dr Mahathir said various measures will also be undertaken to spawn local companies into global players as well as to draw Bumiputera participation in the mainstream of high value-added business activities.

Later, Dr Mahathir presented the MSC/APMITTA' Best of the Best award to e-Business Sdn Bhd for software applications and VMS Technology Sdn Bhd for industrial commercial products.

FortusGen Sdn Bhd won the Smart Learning Applications category, Iris Corp Bhd (Multipurpose Card Solutions category), Informix Sdn Bhd (E-Government Applications category), E-Magazine Online Sdn Bhd (content development category), Computer Protocol (M) Sdn Bhd (value-added communication technologies category), Asia Travel Network Sdn Bhd (start-up companies category) and Universiti Malaysia Sabah and Universiti Malaya (student projects category).

The Prime Minister also toured an exhibition displaying the award finalists' products.