

First foreign ISP launched

NTT MSC claims it can now offer the fastest Internet access service in the country

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CYBERJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, is set to launch the first foreign Internet Service Provider (ISP) service in Malaysia by NTT MSC under the trademark name of "Arcnet" today.

The main constraint all Internet users face is speed, NTT MSC claims it can now offer the fastest Internet access service in Malaysia. NTT MSC is the first ever foreign telecommunication company to be granted such a license by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission.

Arcnet will target a good cross section of clients including multinationals, dotcom firms and individuals. NTT is targeting the expected expansion in e-business in Malaysia.

Its ISP services will cater for those involved in both business to business (B2B) and business to consumer

(B2C) requirement, or a combination of "both" Hotta Akio, CEO of MSC NTT Sdn Bhd said.

He said the the choice of using Malaysia as NTT's springboard in the region is due to Malaysia's initiatives to drive the k-economy and make Malaysia a global IP gateway, Hotta said.

He added the operation in Cyberjaya is expected to serve both the Malaysian customers and those located within the Southeast Asian region. The firm currently has 2,000 registered users from trials that began in July this year.

Numajiri Takashi, senior manager of product development, said "about 60% of our clients are Japanese multinationals while 40% comprise locals and Singaporean clients", he said.

He added that currently, about 20 multinationals are using the Arcnet service in Malaysia. He said projections indicate dotcom startups and multinationals will generate an annual turnover of RM6 million. In the next two years, NTT foresees a threefold

growth in turnover amounting to RM20 million, most of which will be generated by data warehousing and web-hosting services.

The Arcnet service will offer customers a myriad of services. Web hosting and e-mail are just the primary services that are offered. They also provide specialised solutions for firms such as virtual private networks (VPN), systems integration, business solutions and e-commerce solutions.

The most significant aspect of NTT's operations in Cyberjaya is its data warehousing operation. Enclosed in a separate wing from the main building, the 'clean rooms' offer space to clients to store their servers in a fully protected environment. For security sensitive clients or 'mission critical' requirements, the data warehouse offers secured private rooms for customers to house their servers. The state of the art data warehouse is protected by an array of security systems. In addition to the standard electronic pass cards and

code protected doors, the data warehouse is also protected by a biometric security system that uses finger print identification.

The backbone of the services offered by Arcnet is back by NTT Communications, which runs its own managed frame relay system. Commonly known as the Arcstar network, it is an inter-

national permanent virtual circuit data network, owned and managed by NTT. This translates into high security and high-speed data transmission. The Arcstar network currently serves almost every major business capital in the world.

The local IT industry views NTT MSC's entry into the Internet arena as positive. James Coughlan of BioID Malaysia welcomed NTT MSC's entry in the hope that the company will be able to offer "no downtime and dedicated access". "NTT's entry is good competition for the local ISPs. Competition is always good," he said. Other IT folks echo the same sentiment about competition. Thim Liew of ITC Group & Associates welcomed the foreign competition as "... it gives local ISPs a good run for the money and puts pressure on them to improve their own services", he added.

Yong Kok Leong, of VMS Technology expressed interest in the possibility of broader bandwidth being offered by a NTT. Currently, Arcnet sup-

ports both PSTN (Public switched telephone network) and ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) dial-up connections. Broadband access is available at Cyberjaya. At the pre-launch, NTT MSC stated that for now it will not be able to offer ADSL services as the licenses have not been issued.

Arcnet will also offer a standard ISP service to individual Internet users.

Currently, they are offering three major packages and a special student package. Following AOL's recent flat rate Internet access scheme in the US, Arcnet will offer an 'economy package' that allows users to have unlimited access to the net for only RM50 a month or RM500 a year. The 'regular package' is comparable in cost to the current 'pay as you use' system being implemented by local ISPs. The most attractive package offered is the 'student package' which allows users to have unlimited usage for a mere RM25 a month. More information is available at <http://www.arc.net.my>.