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PM: Use MSC to carry out more research work

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SAYING that the Multimedia Super Corridor has progressed far ahead of the target set for it, the Prime Minister said yesterday that foreign companies will find it a useful place to do research, operate from and test information technology products.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad also allayed fears that foreign companies would overshadow or threaten local technological companies as the market for IT solutions was always expanding.

"The MSC has all the necessary infrastructure to help companies achieve progress," Dr Mahathir said in his speech at the launch of Arcnet, a new Internet service package by NTT MSC Sdn Bhd, in Kuala Lumpur.

NTT MSC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Japan's NTT Communications Corporation. It is the first foreign telecommunications company to be given "class licence" by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission to sell its services here.

Dr Mahathir said while Internet usage in Malaysia was "not big enough", it was growing at almost double the rate each year.

He said the number of Internet subscribers had grown from about 90,000 in 1996 to over one million today.

He said this was an assurance to companies that their IT investments here would "reap a rich harvest."

In addition, companies which had the capacity to do research should create solutions for use in the business community which was growing in Malaysia.

"There's a bright future for IT in Malaysia. We had our doubts about the MSC and many were sceptical," Dr Mahathir said.

"But events have shown that the idea was not as ridiculous as once thought. Today, the MSC is a reality."

He said many companies had located their operations in the corridor and interest was being shown by other major IT players.

"The Government will always give encouragement and support to the businesses that operate in the MSC."

At a Press conference after the launch, Dr Mahathir said local companies should not fear being crowded out of the IT market with the presence of global IT corporations.

"The market is expanding rapidly and we are in need of finding new ways to apply information technology. We can't say it is overcrowded because people are still coming up with new solutions."

Earlier, in his speech, Dr Mahathir praised NTT Communications for being one of the strongest supporters of the MSC. It was the first company to receive MSC status and has set up a research and development centre and offices in Cyberjaya.

"Their move has encouraged lots of other companies."

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