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Super corridor worthy of name

WHEN it was established about seven years ago, the Multimedia Super Corridor set a target of attracting the participation of 500 companies by this year. It exceeded that objective two years ahead of schedule and the number of technology companies operating within the MSC is now more than 800. It also aimed at getting 50 world-class corporations within the same time frame, but today, there are 53.

"If that is not success, I don't know what success is," said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the opening of the regional hub of Ericsson, a world leader in the supply of telecommunications technology, in the MSC. The Prime Minister was taking aim at critics who have been labelling the MSC a failure, but the results show that, on the contrary, the MSC is making significant progress. Indeed, considering the short span of seven years, its achievements border on the spectacular. It would be hard to find instances where so much has been done in so short a time, amid the travails of a regional financial crisis and a global dotcom bust.

The MSC is a victim of its own bold vision to fast-track Malaysia into the ICT age. The audacity of its undertaking attracted prophets of doom right from its birth and also raised unrealistic expectations. As a result, every blemish was magnified into a disaster, every hiccup turned into a failure, and every gripe transformed into a vote of no-confidence.

Of course, like every project, there are shortcomings and setbacks. Despite what sceptics say, the MSC has come a long way. The MSC vision is still intact and viable. It took Silicon Valley more than 30 years before its entrepreneurial culture of innovative risktakers made its mark on the business world. The MSC offers world-class companies what Silicon Valley cannot provide: a low-cost, regional high-tech centre to penetrate Asian markets. Malaysia will reap the benefits of the community of creative local technopreneurs that the MSC is incubating for the knowledge-based economy.