

30/07/2003

MSC on course, says PM (HL)

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CYBERJAYA, Tues. - The Multimedia Super Corridor's ability to attract the participation of more than 800 companies has removed scepticism about its viability, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the MSC and its flagship hub-city, Cyberjaya, were moving successfully in the envisaged direction and were not a failure as some critics believed.

He said the MSC's success could also be measured in the overwhelming interest shown by technology-based corporations, foreign and local, in operating from the "intelligent" area.

"We are very glad Ericsson has moved into Cyberjaya. Ericsson has shown courage. We want to make Cyberjaya the hub of information-based industries.

"Some people still doubt that the MSC will become a reality. We tell them: 'We set a target to attract 500 companies by 2003. But now, we have more than 800.' If that is not success, I don't know what success is," Dr Mahathir said at the opening of Ericsson's RM80 million Malaysian headquarters and regional hub here this morning.

The Ericsson@MSC building houses a showcase of "live" networks, tracing the evolution of the mobile telecommunications standard from Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) to its third generation (3G).

He said Malaysia was happy to be associated with companies like Ericsson as they had an edge in telecommunications technology and foresight on what future technology would be.

This had helped the Government to turn Cyberjaya into a hub for Information Age industries.

"We want to move along with the rest of the world and we want to be conversant in state-of-the-art technology," he added.

Dr Mahathir thanked Ericsson for its unwavering support and confidence in Malaysia.

He described the close rapport and co-operation between the multinational corporation and the Government as the realisation of the smart partnership concept.

"Ericsson's venture here has been beneficial to Malaysia and also to Ericsson, which is why today we have a much better participation of Ericsson in Malaysia's industrialisation process and, in particular, in Malaysia's advance into the information age."

He said Malaysia was not a destination for foreign direct investments when Ericsson first ventured into the country more than three decades ago.

Congratulating Ericsson for its commitment to the transfer of technology and training of Malaysian information technology engineers, Dr Mahathir said foreign participation in the field of IT was vital for the development of the industry.

"This is an industry that is progressing very rapidly. The shelf life of products now is only a few months, maybe even shorter.

"Every time a new product is produced, somebody else comes up with a better product.

"We now have blue tooth, green tooth, all kinds of teeth," he said to loud applause from those present.

Ericsson Asia Pacific president and LM Ericsson executive vice-president Ragnar Back said choosing Malaysia as the regional hub was a logical choice since Malaysia was among the first in the region to embrace IT in a

comprehensive and serious way.

Back also pledged his company's continued support to the MSC initiative and towards further co-operation with the Government.

Paying tribute to Dr Mahathir for his vision and resolve in turning his vision into reality, Back said:

"The information and communications technology industry has benefited greatly from your vision and leadership.

"We shall miss your guidance and support when you retire. But you have our assurance for unwavering support to your vision under the new leadership."

Energy, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Amar Leo Moggie was also present.