

MSC gearing itself to be global ICT centre

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PENANG: Malaysia wants to be the gateway to regional global markets and the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) is gearing itself to be the global information communications technology (ICT) hub.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the MSC was on the right track towards making itself an attractive investment destination, especially in ICT.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia was working hard to capitalise on its strong political and economic relations at the regional and international level to boost trade.

"Companies operating in Malaysia have market access to Asean, China, India and the Middle-East.

"The Government also emphasises on the development of the creative content industry, and more than 100 creative multimedia MSC-status companies are exporting their products and services globally.

"Major content companies like Disney, Sony, Nintendo and some Hollywood studios are outsourcing parts of their work to Malaysian companies," he said when opening the ninth MSC International Advisory Panel Meeting (IAP) at a hotel here yesterday.

Abdullah said the Government was committed to making the MSC more attractive, adding that it was updating the MSC Bill of Guarantees and re-examining the package of incentives.

"We are also taking steps to set up an MSC ICT Talent Development Institute to provide knowledge workers for the industry.

"We have also built a strong niche in shared services and outsourcing operations and the MSC now plays host to 48 companies, providing



OPENING ADDRESS: Abdullah delivering his opening speech at the meeting yesterday. Sitting next to the Prime Minister are (from left) Multimedia Development Corporation CEO Datuk Dr Mohamed Arif Nun, Perdana Leadership Foundation honorary president Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

11,200 jobs," he said.

This is the first time the IAP meeting was held outside the MSC area.

Abdullah said Bayan Lepas Cybercity had grown from a labour-intensive, low-technology centre to a centre for highly-skilled, capital-intensive and high-technology industries.

He noted that the theme for this year's meeting, *ICT Driving the*

Innovation Society, was apt as Malaysia prepared to venture into the second phase of Vision 2020.

"Innovation is a vital component of economic prosperity and the wealthiest nations are the ones that are also the most innovative," he said.

The Prime Minister also said the MSC had been successful at catalysing growth, adding that the ICT industry

grew by 8.3% last year, which was higher than the country's overall gross domestic product growth of 7.1%.

According to market research firm IDC, he said, ICT spending in Malaysia, which amounted to US\$2.5bil (RM9.44bil) in 2003, had been forecast to grow by 10% between 2003 and 2008, making the country among the fastest-growing ICT markets in Asia.