

Quicker roll-out of MSC products

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IN an effort to make the Multimedia Super Corridor well-known worldwide, Malaysia will accelerate the roll-out of products and services produced by MSC companies to the global market through stronger and more targeted marketing efforts, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia also intended to leverage on the country's special relationships with Asean, Organisation of the Islamic Conference and Non-Aligned Movement member countries to secure business opportunities.

He said he was pleased to announce that Malaysia had won several international contracts in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Myanmar and Iran, among others, and that the Multimedia Development Corporation would set up offices in Dalian, China, and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia by the end of this year.

He said in moving the MSC forward there was a need to understand deeply the challenges that Malaysia was up against, along with the willingness and capability to change traditional ways.

"Apart from developing the MSC into a global hub, the other fundamental areas to be addressed include developing the local Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) industry as well as the human capital and innovation capabilities."

He said this in his opening remarks at the launch of the meeting yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the strong growth Malaysia was currently experiencing had caused a shortage of skilled knowledge-workers in several fields, including medicine, engineering, ICT and other science and technology-related fields.

"Therefore we have directed a comprehensive yet targeted 'brain gain' programme formulated to develop proper policies and incentives to attract Malaysian knowledge-workers residing abroad as well as foreigners to work in Malaysia.

"But we cannot attract knowledge-workers without also providing them an environment that allows them to flourish.

"The National Innovation Council (which he chairs) has been given the task of rationalising and strengthening the National Innovation System across all technology areas.

"We want to enhance linkages among universities, research institutes, industries and the public sector."

In policy, he said, the intellectual property law and immigration procedures were being reviewed, while funding and incentive packages were being streamlined to encourage research and innovation.

He said there were many new and exciting areas of research, including biotechnology and its confluence with ICT that would be funded and explored.

"More attention will also be given to nurture and develop the creative content industry in Malaysia. Knowledge-workers will not be forced to leave the country for lack of opportunities."

Abdullah said the first phase of the MSC had succeeded, having created more than 1,000 MSC-status companies, 19,000 knowledge-based jobs, RM5 billion in ICT sales (of which RM1.2 billion went towards exports), and RM419 million in research and development expenditure.

MSC-status companies now represent over 70 per cent of companies listed on the Mesdaq board.

He said while foreign investors were welcome, the development of the country's local ICT players must also



HELLO THERE: Abdullah meeting delegates in Putrajaya yesterday. — NST pictures by Hadzme Mohd Jaafar

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Abdullah

be accelerated.

He said a number of Malaysian companies had demonstrated their capabilities to produce and sell high-value ICT products, and this healthy trend must continue to be nurtured.

The Government plans to give more opportunities for local technology-based small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) to "move up the value chain" and access international markets.

Currently, Malaysia's ICT exports are valued at RM1.2 billion, and Abdullah hoped this figure would be raised.

Malaysia's ICT industry's annual growth of 8.3 per cent has overtaken the global average of 6.2 per cent.

This year alone, total IT spending in Malaysia is estimated at US\$2.5 billion (RM9.5 billion) while the ICT market is expected to be worth US\$10.49 billion

in 2007.

As of the second quarter of 2004, Malaysia had 9.4 million Internet users, nearly 175,000 broadband subscribers and more than 12.4 million cellular subscribers.



SHARED VISION: IAP-MSM members (from left) Iris Corporation Berhad managing director Datuk Tan Say Jim, Cyber Century Forum chairman Diana Lady Dougan, Redtone Expect Innovation Malaysia group managing director Wei Chuan Beng and Dr Terry Cutler of Cutler & Company Pty Ltd (North Melbourne) at the Putrajaya Convention Centre.