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Dr M meets heads of top IT firms

Zainul Ariffin in San Francisco

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had a private meeting on Wednesday with the heads of three leading United States information technology companies, which industry observers say is a positive sign for Malaysia's ambitious Multimedia Super Corridor project.

He met individually with the CEO of Microsoft Corporation Bill Gates, the chairman of Cisco Systems Inc, John Chambers and CEO of Netscape Corp James Barksdale in Santa Clara, California, about an hour's drive from San Francisco. Sources said the fact that the businessmen had come to meet Dr Mahathir was significant as it indicated their seriousness and commitment to the MSC.

The three have been named members of the International Advisory Panel of the MSC.

The advisory panel, which will convene its first meeting with Dr Mahathir on Thursday, will be made up of heads of 30 leading edge companies in information technology. Twenty-six of those named will be attending the meeting.

The day-long closed-door meeting, to be held at Stamford University, will also include discussion on the development of the MSC as well as a "walkthrough" of the project.

The 30-member IAP is chaired by Dr Mahathir and also includes Multimedia Development Corporation executive chairman Tan Sri Dr Othman Yeop Abdullah.

The primary responsibility of the IAP members is to provide advice and counsel to the Prime Minister and the Malaysian Government on strategic issues related to the MSC.

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