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More investment pledge

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MEMBERS of the International Advisory Panel (IAP) of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) yesterday offered to make additional investments and expertise to Malaysia to "link up" schools to the Internet and base more researchers here.

Siemens AG executive vice president Axel Hass said at the end of the two-day IAP meeting that the company will invest an additional US\$1 billion (US\$1 = RM3.74) in three years in addition to the US\$2.5 billion investment in Malaysia.

"The overall investment plans are related to Malaysia ... MSC is a testbed but the 'real life' is outside.

"Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said the investments outside the MSC are also welcome," he told reporters after meeting the Prime Minister in Cyberjaya yesterday.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir planted the "Eugenea Oelanada" tree, which has of red and green leaves, at Cyberjaya.

The Prime Minister also held a closed-door session with several IAP members including Lucent Technologies Inc executive vice-president Benjamin Verwaayen.

Verwaayen, speaking to reporters after the meeting, said the company is offering to loan its scientists to Universiti Telekom Malaysia and will set up a regional headquarters for the GSM system in Malaysia.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who also attended the networking session, said Sun Microsystems suggested "wiring up" schools in Malaysia, which is a programme similar to the NetDay programme in the US.

"The IAP members are very excited about participating in such a programme and Malaysia needs to do some homework first and decide later if we can launch something like the NetDay programme here.

"A lot of work needs to be done because we cannot just wire up the schools without having the systems. We have to look into the systems, financing and the involvement of these companies," Najib said.

Malaysia, Najib said, is looking for a package deal as "we need to have the use of computers in a more pervasive way and get the younger people to familiarise themselves with the computer."

He said Malaysia may be in favour of the proposal provided there is a package deal and enough companies participating and sufficient financing.

Sun Microsystems, he said, will discuss the broad principles of establishing the programme and is prepared to study the groundwork for its implementation in Malaysia.

Sun Microsystems chief scientist Dr John Gage said the wiring of the schools can be done on a volunteer basis, where engineers can bring technology to schools by connecting it to the Internet.

"The foreign companies are prepared to help and so it is up to them to volunteer to help. Then we will be able to complement Malaysia's plan to link up schools to the Internet," he said.

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