

PM to meet with IT industry leaders

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PETALING JAYA, Wed: The big names in the international multimedia and information technology industries will be meeting again this weekend with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the fifth meeting of the International Advisory Panel.

The IAP, which is chaired by the prime minister himself, comprises 43 prominent members from the industry like Lucent Technologies vice-chairman Ben Verwaayen, Infosys Technologies Limited chairman N.R. Narayana Murthy, NEC Corporation chairman emeritus Datuk Dr Tadahiro Sekimoto and Microsoft Corporation chairman Bill Gates.

It advises the government on the development of the MSC.

The focus of this year's meeting to discuss ways to position the Multimedia SuperCorridor (MSC) as a positive contributing factor in the local economy is not only timely, but necessary.

For the first time since its inception in 1996, the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC)

commissioned international consulting firm McKinsey & Co to do a study on the progress of the MSC.

But, the findings that were reported in February gave no cause for celebration as it concluded that nothing much is happening in the 15 x 50km corridor stretching from Kuala Lumpur to Putrajaya.

Essentially, the firm noted the problem of red tape and the lack of investments as some of the factors impeding development.

Even Mahathir has admitted that the MSC did not really contribute much to the economy despite consuming RM14 billion in state funds.

However, MDC executive chairman Tan Sri Othman Yeop Abdullah said the MSC created some 12,000 knowledge-incentive jobs this year and generated RM2 billion in sales for the companies.

In 1996, McKinsey helped draft the MSC's blueprint and identified some of the key flagship areas like e-government and smart schools.

In defence of the MSC, IAP member Prof William E Miller from the Stanford School of Business attributed its slow development to the slowdown in the global economy and argued that it is still too early to expect the project to yield results.

A recent glitch involves the delay of payment to those who were involved in the e-Village project.

Contractors, subcontractors and consultants are complaining of not having been paid despite repeated promises by MDC.

The master developer, Entertainment Village Sdn Bhd, which was responsible for developing what was touted as a world class centre for multimedia and film production, defaulted on its payments totalling RM52.4 million and had to give it up to the MDC to settle its debts.

The prime minister will give his opening remarks on the progress of the MSC at the Cyberview Lodge tomorrow and conduct one-to-one meetings with the IAP members on Friday and Saturday.

On Friday morning, he is scheduled to open the MSC-Multimedia Asia Expo 2001 at the PWTC, while the 3rd MSC-IAP Multimedia Business Summit will be held at the Palace of the Golden Horses.

Summit speakers include Lionel Lim of Sun Microsystems, Les Hayman of SAP Asia Pacific, Dr Terry Cutler of Cutler & Co, Zam Mohd Esa of Lucent Tech, Simon Wong of Dell Asia Pacific Sdn Bhd and Derek Williams of Oracle.