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Best ever IAP

THE Sixth MSC International Advisory Panel Meeting is finally over. By all counts, it appears that this year's meeting was different from previous IAP meetings, held annually since 1997. Everything was done in a very orderly and systematic manner.

Even the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, playing the role of IAP chairman, himself admits that this is the best IAP meeting ever. Apparently, rather than wait for inputs from panel members, the organisers this year asked a few 'provocateurs' to provoke discussions in a critical way.

Aided by the provocative questions thrown at the IAP by the provocateurs, all IAP members had something to say during the meeting, the Prime Minister says. There was clearly an air of camaraderie among IAP members. Terry Cutler, an IAP member and managing director of Cutler and Co., says that given the huge international effort in championing the MSC cause, the panel should perhaps be called the 'International Collaboration Panel'. To some extent, Cutler is right. What say you MDC?

One of the topics discussed at length was the question of open source software. The Prime Minister mentions during the IAP press conference that the government is using open source software on a trial basis for some of its E-Government projects. As expected, there were some words of caution on open source software from Craig Mundie, chief technology officer of Microsoft USA, who represented Bill Gates at the IAP powwow.

Mundie is a well-known personality among the open source movement. Prior to joining Microsoft, Mundie founded a supercomputer company that used UNIX under the Berkeley licence. This background gives Mundie a rare ability to study the issue of open source software objectively.

He has spoken on open source in conferences and has written essays on the subject. As this issue's lead story is coincidentally on the Open Source Debate, I grabbed the opportunity to seek his views, as well as some other IAP members', on this subject which is bound to have a profound impact on the IT industry.