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K-economy goal still in sight

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CYBERJAYA, Fri. - The International Advisory Panel to the Multimedia Super Corridor reaffirmed its commitment to helping the Government and local companies develop a knowledge-based economy.

Members of the panel today began one-on-one meetings with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also IAP chairman.

"They are definitely committed to working together with the Malaysian Government and companies in order to help us move into the K-economy and electronic government with greater impact."

Dr Mahathir said the one-on-one talks had been useful in defining the roles the panel members would play and in determining the Government's support for their views.

The meetings, which were closed to the media, continue tomorrow. Fourteen panel members are here to attend the 6th IAP meeting, while 12 others sent representatives.

Dr Mahathir said the panel members, who are senior executives of multinational ICT companies, would look at how their respective companies could help market Malaysian ICT products.

He said Oracle Corporation, for example, has helped a local company market its software for airport management to an American user.

"They have successfully used this software in the airport at Fort Worth, Texas, which is one of the biggest airports in America. So Malaysian capability is quite clear here.

"I discussed with Oracle how they might help market our ICT products further using their connections."

Dr Mahathir also said Microsoft had suggested the Government introduce students to its hand-held PC tablets on which data can be written, stored and retrieved.

"Microsoft suggested that these tablets be introduced to children from age six in schools as a textbook or exercise book.

"But this suggestion has been made before and I feel that the tablet does not have enough functions to totally replace textbooks, exercise books and other tools."

Asked about his commitment to the IAP and the MSC after he retires as Prime Minister next October, Dr Mahathir said there was a strong team to continue the work.

"It's not me, the team is there. The people are around and they know their work, they can do it without me. I'll be a catalyst.

"If I get invited to a conference, if I am allowed to participate, then I will come and give my views. But I will not chair the panel."

Asked if the Prime Minister would by convention also become the IAP chairman, he said, "It's better if the Prime Minister remains IAP chairman. Once I'm out of the Government, I don't want to interfere in government affairs."