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Hopes remain high for Budget 2004

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INFORMATION and communications technology (ICT) must have been the buzzword over the whole of last week, with the staging of the second Malaysia ICT Week at various locations.

The week-long bash comprised a series of events such as an international expo which showcased current and emerging technologies, a seminar on electronic security, culminated with the seventh International Advisory Panel (IAP) meeting of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) in Cyberjaya last Saturday.

With the local ICT industry trying to regain its footing following the global economic slowdown, the staging of the ICT week which received strong support from the Government serves to provide a measure of inspiration, and a much-needed boost for the ICT community to move forward during hard times.

The IAP meeting especially should give the caretakers of the MSC project fresh ideas based on input from panel members, as it moves into the second phase implementation.

This week, the ICT fraternity, along with Malaysians from all walks of life, look for another source for inspiration - Budget 2004 - which will be presented by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Dewan Rakyat on Friday.

As in previous years, hopes are high that the Budget will bring some cheers to boost the local ICT industry and further catalyse its growth in an increasingly competitive environment. Over the past few weeks, there have been calls by industry representatives for more incentives under Budget 2004 to promote locally developed ICT products and services, tax rebates on computer products and peripherals, and more seed funding for technopreneurs.

Since the global economic recession in 1997, there have not been much Budget cheers for the ICT community as far as I can recall.

So, will Budget 2004 bring more goodies?