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PM: Let's take the lead

Abdullah wants application to increase food production

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has proposed that a flagship application which combines efforts in agriculture, biotechnology and Information Communication Technology (ICT) be undertaken to increase food production.

The Prime Minister urged the Multimedia Super Corridor Malaysia International Advisory Panel (MSC-IAP) members to consider the role that new technologies and applications could play in view of escalating global food prices.

"With the world average food prices going up by 75% since 2000, I feel that it is perhaps the most opportune time to put ICT, agriculture and biotechnology to work to overcome the challenges that Malaysia and the rest of the world are facing.

"I would venture that Malaysia's rich natural resources put us in an ideal position to take the lead in this area," he said in his opening remarks before chairing the closed-door 11th MSC-IAP meeting here yesterday.

"If there is enough interest, perhaps a flagship application which combines efforts in agriculture, biotechnology along with advances in ICT could be undertaken. Perhaps this could be an area of discussion and I invite IAP members to give their views on this," he said.

Abdullah also said Malaysia's growth for this year was expected to be in the region of 5% to 6% despite the United States' slowdown and uncertainty in the global economy.

As of last month, he said, Malaysia's foreign reserves were the 12th largest in the world, amounting to RM396.7bil.

Abdullah said Malaysia's transformation needed to be accelerated by focusing on efforts on innovation, which was why the MSC-IAP meeting was themed "MSC Malaysia: Innovation for Wealth Creation".

Meanwhile, Malaysia received praise from a number of international information technology experts who said the country was "world class" in its technology.

Lady Diana Dougan, chairman of Cyber Century, said no other country in the world had a government and leadership that sat in at meetings the whole day to discuss the importance of ICT.

She said Malaysia's experience in e-government has worked well, adding that its experience in the field was longer than "any government I know."

Dr Robert Bishop, founder and

chairman of BBWorld Consulting Services Sari, said Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) had made incredible progress over the years.

Prof William Miller from Stanford University praised Malaysia's IT industry, saying its foundation was very strong and impressive, which was why it could attract top companies like DHL and AOG to invest in the country.

DHL ISSC Europe IT services managing director Stephen McGuckin said its facility here was managed and run by Malaysians who provided high quality products and services.

"We have got facilities in Europe and Asia but people want it done in Cyberjaya because they know about the quality and work ethics here," he said.