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SLEEK: Wahab (left) and Tang showing off a prototype of Idola. Looking on is Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation ICT policy director Dr Raslan Ahmad.

MAK CIK GIVES BIRTH TO JEN-ii AND IDOLA

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KUALA LUMPUR: Mimos Bhd's Mak Cik PC (or Aunty PC, translated from the Bahasa Malaysia), a prototype, has spawned a new computer that will appeal to the younger crowd.

The research organisation signed a memorandum of understanding with local PC manufacturer, FTEC Systems Sdn Bhd, to jointly develop this other version of the Mak Cik PC.

It is called Idola (Idol, in English) — which stands for Internet Device for Learning Applications. The venture is primarily for product

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DATUK ABDUL WAHAB
ABDULLAH, MIMOS CHIEF
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

development and commercialisation of the ultra-portable computer.

Mimos will be transferring researched technologies to FTEC to aid in the further development of Idola.

Previously codenamed CyberTablet, Idola is powered by chipmaker Intel Corp's Atom low-power processor.

Developed in collaboration with Intel, Idola will be targeted at the lifestyle market and education sector, as well as users with a limited budget who need basic computing capabilities and Internet access.

Idola has touchscreen features, WiFi, WiMAX and Bluetooth wireless connectivity, as well as IPv6 (Internet Protocol version 6) technology.

IPv6 is the next generation protocol designed to replace the current IPv4 technology which is close to 20 years old. IPv6 fixes a

number of problems in IPv4, such as the limited number of available IPv4 addresses.

Jen-ii

Earlier, the Mak Cik PC spawned the Jen-ii — a device with simple computing functions that will be used to introduce the Internet to senior citizens.

Jen-ii, which will be priced at less than RM500, makes it easy for its users to create online communities — where they can, for example, compare grocery prices, attend

religious classes online and exchange e-mail.

Idola, on the other hand, delivers full-fledged computing capabilities; everything from wordprocessing to computer games.

"There must be an element of fun in the Idola for it to appeal to the younger crowd. After all, new teaching methods are geared towards fun," said Mimos chief executive officer Datuk Abdul Wahab Abdullah at a press conference after the MOU signing.

Despite Idola's minimalist design,

a demonstration of the device showed that it is able to handle 3D graphics as capably as any personal computer today. "It can definitely handle more than just *Solitaire*," quipped FTEC Resources Bhd managing director Tang Boon Koon, who was referring to a basic Windows game.

He said Idola's battery can last up to six hours on a full charge and the computer weighs only 0.8kg — "it is one of the thinnest Internet devices in the market."

Tang said FTEC plans to sell the notebook for US\$299 (RM987). "We're also looking for the right place to manufacture the product so that we can maintain that sub-RM1,000 price," he said.

Idola is expected to be on the Malaysian market in the first quarter of next year. "We also hope to push it to other countries in the South-East Asian region, as well as the Middle East," Tang said.

There are other ultra portables in the market now, such as Asus' Eee PC (RM1,299), but Mimos believes the Idola is even more fuss-free. "The technology is not that complicated and we've come up with a sleek and simple design," Wahab said.

Mimos' Mak Cik PC, which was unveiled last year, is seen as a solution that can help bridge the "digital divide," that gap between the technology haves and have-nots. It is also easily customised to suit specific market segments.