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Women of distinction

By Muharyani Othman

Note:- (STF)- Five women were honoured with the **Avon-Tan Sri Fatimah Woman of Distinction Award** last week while the **Pertiwi Lifetime Achievement Award** was bestowed upon the **country's first woman Cabinet Minister**. Muharyani Othman reports on their achievements.

EVEN as she walked up onto the stage to receive the Avon-Tan Sri Fatimah Woman of Distinction Award last Friday night, work was on scientist Dr Choo Yuen May's mind as the next day she had to catch an early flight to Japan to do more research on palm oil.

Choo, who is with the Palm Oil Research Institute Malaysia (Porim), will be spending a few weeks at a scientific research institute in Tokyo for collaborative research with her Japanese counterparts.

Choo was selected to receive the award in the medicine and sciences category. The other recipients were former director-general of education Datuk Asiah Abu Samah in the education category, Ursula Goh nee Dumpangol (social services), associate professor Dr Siti Zainon Ismail (enterprise) and Khatijah Ahmad (entrepreneurship).

The inaugural Anugerah Pertiwi Sanjungan Perdana or Pertiwi Lifetime Achievement Award was bestowed upon former Wanita Umno leader and Welfare Minister *Tan Sri Fatimah Hashim*.

The Woman of Distinction award recipients received their trophies from Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Bainun while Fatimah received hers from Yang diPertuan Agong Sultan Azlan Shah.

Asiah was represented by her niece Rosnija Baharum as she was away in England to receive yet another award - an honorary doctorate in social sciences from the West Sussex Institute of Higher Education.

Choo has been involved in the development of various novel processes for the palm-based industry since she began her career at Porim as a research assistant in 1982.

Last month, she was made leader of the processing research group.

Her research covers the chemistry and technology of palm-based oleochemicals and their derivatives, palm-based carotenoids, free radicals and palm-based natural anti-oxidants.

Her efforts paid off when she was granted eight patents with three patents pending (she is the inventor of one patent and co-inventor of 10 patents).