

18/03/1998

Dr M accorded Atsumi master builders award

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was last night conferred the prestigious international IFAWPCA-Atsumi Award in recognition of his contribution to the construction industry.

In accepting the "master builders" award at a dinner held in conjunction with the International Federation of Asian and Western Pacific Contractors' Associations (IFAWPCA) convention in Kuala Lumpur, the Prime Minister said he has never been a contractor or actually built anything, and that his involvement in construction activities was largely confined to asking people to build things.

"Fortunately, they have succeeded. The mega projects seen in Malaysia are not my own... they are a dream of this country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said although these projects have sometimes been dubbed as "mega", they are in fact rather small when compared to the infrastructure projects undertaken in many other countries.

"The new airport (in Sepang), occupying 10ha of land, is one of the biggest airports anywhere in the world and costs some US\$4 billion (US\$1 = RM3.78) to build. But there is one airport in another country which costs US\$20 billion... it is five times bigger," he added.

The IFAWPCA secretariat, based in Manila, chose Dr Mahathir as the recipient of the award for his leadership and being the prime mover for the construction of various big projects in Malaysia, including the Penang Bridge, North-South Expressway, Kuala Lumpur Tower, Petronas Twin Towers, Light Rail Transport network, Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Second Link, Putrajaya, Cyberjaya and Multimedia Super Corridor.

The IFAWPCA-Atsumi was instituted in 1993 at a convention of the federation in Tokyo by the late Takeo Atsumi, a world renowned master builder who had contributed significantly towards the development of the global construction industry.

He served 15 years as president of the Overseas Construction Association of Japan Inc and was a lifetime member of IFAWPCA.

Atsumi was also instrumental in the formation of the Confederation of International Contractors Associations, where he served a two-year term as president.

The award, presented at every IFAWPCA convention, was created to accord recognition to outstanding person or persons for rendering meritorious services in the promotion of the construction industry.

Dr Mahathir was presented the award, which also carries a cash prize of US\$3,000, by Madam Itsuko, Atsumi's widow.

In jest, the Prime Minister said Malaysians are "small people trying to do things to cheer themselves up."

"We are trying to cheer ourselves up at this point of time when the construction sector is facing problems," he said, adding that by postponing some projects, it hoped that confidence in the country will be restored.

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