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PM conferred award for role in promoting IT industry

Lokman Mansor

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is conferred the Asian-Oceanian Computing Industry Organisation (Asocio) IT Award 1998 for his efforts in promoting information technology and IT-related industries.

The award was presented to the Prime Minister by Asocio president Dr F.C. Kohli at the Asocio-Pikom Gala Banquet in Petaling Jaya last night. The Association of the Computer Industry Malaysia (Pikom) is playing host to this year's Asocio general assembly.

The international award is presented each year to a person in the host country for significant contributions made towards the promotion and development of the IT industry.

Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems (Mimos) Bhd chief executive officer Tengku Datuk Dr Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen, who read out Dr Mahathir's citation for the award, said the Prime Minister has promoted IT as the new growth industry for Malaysia.

He told the audience that the Prime Minister had played a pivotal role in the formation of Mimos in 1985, the National IT Council, and the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

Through a series of anecdotes, Azzman talked of how Dr Mahathir had become an expert in IT, and was able to articulate his ideas effectively during various MSC roadshows to the US, Japan and Europe.

"As CEO of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir has been able to lead the country into uncharted waters with success," he said.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir said he accepted the award on behalf of everyone who had contributed towards making the MSC a reality.

"I am very glad that all this while, the ideas they have come to me with have actually materialised. We now have the MSC, one of the most unique plans in the Information Age the world has ever known," he said.

Dr Mahathir said while every country or city has its own Information Age programme, no one has anything like the MSC. Some have even expressed the intention to come up with initiatives similar to the MSC.

"I am quite sure they will all succeed because there is no way to do something that is unique forever. We have to share with others because we may need others too, and hope that they will also share with us," he added.

The Prime Minister, referring to Azzman's anecdotes about his involvement in the IT sector and the MSC, said in jest that he actually did not know what he was letting himself in for.

"When he (Azzman) first proposed this he mentioned a figure of RM5 million. At that time we did not have problems with the economy. We had some money, so I agreed immediately.

"Now I regret because he keeps asking for more and more money. And he no longer asks for single-digit figures. The latest amount he asked for was RM600 million," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister added: "Fortunately he has delivered, including of course that speech he just gave."

Pikom was established in 1986 as a voluntary self-funding association representing the IT industry in Malaysia. As at November 18 1998, its membership comprised 290 companies involved in the provision of IT products and services. Together they command about 80 per cent of the total IT trade in Malaysia.

Asocio comprises the respective industry associations of the 15 member

countries in the Asia Pacific region. Its membership base includes about 3,000 major IT companies.

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