

# Fame and fortune come with a price, says Mirzan

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At 42, Mirzan Mahathir, the eldest son of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, knows exactly where he stands.

The head honcho of one of the region's top logistics companies, Konsortium Logistik Bhd, has carved out an indisputable role in the business world, but he is never far from his father's shadow.

"It's a fact. You cannot disown your father. My position is very small. Compared to my father, it is overshadowed," he told *Today* at the Asean Woman Leaders convention.

The two-day event, which brings together a spectrum of women in leadership positions, is co-organised by the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute - a non-profit and non-political research institute headed by Mirzan.

Growing up in an environment where the family name is worth its weight in gold, Mahathir's children have learned from day one that fame comes with a price tag.

"There are pros and cons to it. We have to behave responsibly and never abuse it. We're concerned with the

upholding of our family name and how people view us," said Mirzan with measured circumspection.

Among the three sons, Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir, the only child to have followed his father into politics, is perhaps the most visible.

Next comes Marina Mahathir, president of the Malaysian Aids Council, and a fire-brand newspaper columnist, who's nicknamed the Asian Princess Diana for her AIDS advocacy work.

In comparison, Mirzan is guarded and shuns publicity. That's partly because he knows how easily the finger can be pointed at him.

When Malaysia's national shipping line, MISC, paid US\$220 million (RM836 mil-

lion) in cash, and assumed US\$311 million (RM1.18 billion) in debt for two shipping units of KPB, the deal was panned as a "bailout".

Responding to public perceptions that he gets special deals from his links with the government, Mirzan explained: "When you lose, you keep quiet about it. When you win, people get to know about it.

"You only announce the successes, not the failures.

"You open the door and the person is giving you the chance to present a case. But it doesn't mean that you'll win the case if your solution is not as good as someone else's."

The man who studied electronics engineering and computer science said his father had bought him a "small computer" to whet his interest.

"My father has never forced us to do anything, whether it's to get any kind of degree, a job, or who we choose to marry. All he hopes is that we'll make the right decisions."

The father of three sons and a daughter, aged between three and eight, has adopted the same parenting approach.

He said just as his mother had passed on her values to him when he went overseas to study at a very young age, he and his homemaker wife, Jane, were trying to raise their children the same way. - Today