SPEECH BY TUN DR MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD AT THE INAUGURAL LAUNCH OF OSDC.MY AND OPEN SOUCE INDUSTRY GLOBAL LINKAGE AT BERJAYA TIMES SQUARE, MONDAY, 1 JUNE, 2009

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1.   Firstly I would like to thank OSDC.my for inviting me to this dinner and also to talk on a subject about which I cannot claim to know much.

2.   I am 84 years of age, too old to learn new things. It is an embarrassment. I was among those who suggested Linux open source years ago. I had almost forgotten about it. And now you tell me you have an Open Source Development Club here in Malaysia. I read your brief Charter on OSDC.my. I must admit I can hardly understand it.

3.   You talk in an entirely new language which I have difficulty in understanding. This is made worse by the frequent use of acronyms which I always fail to remember what they represent.

4.   I am amazed at the use of such words and terms like Foxie, Ubuntu, GNU, Perl, Ruby, Phyton, Fedora and many others, which are the names of animals, precious stones and clothing – it goes to show that technology creators can be whimsical and relate to the mundane and the ordinary. How else can a sophisticated thing like a computer be called Apple. Then you have search engines called Yahoo and Google.

5.   But the speed of progress in the information age is mind-boggling if we take for example the development of the telephone. The cellular phone which initially was to be a replacement for a limited range radio phone is today a computer, a calculator, a TV and Internet receiver and dispatcher, a camera and about everything else that we can imagine an electronic equipment can do. Its range now covers the whole globe, and the sound is fantastically clear. It once saved a man's life from a tiger attack because he could call for help with his versatile cellular phone. I would have been eaten by the tiger because I don't carry my cellular. I depend on my staff.

6.   The knowledge that we can access through the computer are limitless. It is said that we can study for a post graduate degree simply by owning a computer. Though not computer-savvy I have found the computer invaluable for verifying historical facts and data about almost any event that had taken place centuries ago or yesterday.

7.   But like all things available to men, knowledge and its acquisition can be for evil as much as for the good. The blogs for example can be used to demonize people, scare and frighten them and create panic. The SMS can be used for similar purposes.

8.   But we know how useful they can be for making the truth known and for individuals to air their views and feelings freely.

9.   I was told by some people a long time ago that when we use the Internet, whatever you do or write would be recorded in some far away place. There is no secrecy. Since the Government was using the Internet a lot, it was frightening to think that some foreign persons would know all our so-called confidential records and correspondence.

10.   Being naïve I suggested that we develop our own operating system. I think a lot of savvy Government staff tried hard but got nowhere. There apparently is no bypassing the Internet.

11.   Then some started talking about Linux, about open source. This opened up a lot of mind-boggling use of the computer. Seems that everyone can develop software etc. etc.

12.   At that stage I gave up.

13.   Now you are telling me about the Global Open Source development Club. I do not think I am qualified to be a member.

14.   Still I appreciate the expertise and the knowledge that comes with it.

15.   I was in Korea a few days back and I was amazed at this one-time hermit nation which has made use of modern technology to achieve what I would call wonders which changed its image completely. Korea has the biggest percentage of people who are computer savvy. They have trained a huge member of IT engineers so that Samsung, a name we have only recently become familiar with is now technologically as advanced as Sony Corporation.

16.   Under the Look East policy we have a number of young Malaysians studying engineering in Korea. One of them had recently topped the class despite having to listen to lectures in Korean but read textbooks in English.

17.   Japan's development was very fast but the Koreans are faster. Japan started its modernization during the Meiji Period more than 100 years ago. Korea started to modernize only after World War II. For the Koreans Japan is the benchmark. They want to hit the benchmark, even go beyond it to become the benchmark for the world. I think we can use Korea as a benchmark.

18.   I have always believed that we can do what others can do. When I asked the girl who topped the class, she had a simple answer for me. "Malaysia Boleh" she said.

19.   So we can. We can do what the Koreans or the Japanese can do. All we need really is determination and the willingness to learn and do things repeatedly

until we master them. If we fail the first time we must try again, and again and again. Believe me in the end you will succeed.

20.	I may not be computer savvy but I believe the sum total of my knowledge today is far more than what it was before the Internet, Yahoo and Google.

21.	I bought an Encyclopedia Britannica computer disc. How silly. Yahoo and Google can give me more information than the Encyclopedias. And accessing the info is easier also. Truly nobody should plead ignorance about anything now as you can get to know things via the computer.

22.	So my congratulation to the OSDC.my. Keep on enlarging your circle and all your knowledge and ideas for the open source. Malaysia cannot but benefit from it.