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Abdul Wahab (centre) with his key team members

# FIRING UP Mimos

| BY KARAMJIT SINGH |

Speaking to Datuk Abdul Wahab Abdullah, CEO and president of Mimos Bhd, one feels the energy, urgency and vibrancy emanating from the lean 53-year-old. Indeed, as the person tasked by the government to shake Mimos out of its stupor, he needs boundless energy, optimism and a sense of mission to reignite Mimos and drive it towards achieving its mission of being the leading R&D organisation for ICT in Malaysia.

Abdul Wahab joined Mimos three years ago on July 1, 2006, with all the right credentials. He had cut his teeth on the corporate world with Motorola, where he rose through the ranks to become the first Malaysian to head its Penang R&D facility in 1993. Indeed, Abdul Wahab came into Mimos all fired up but found that while he was ready to run, the organisation only had its walking shoes on.

"But you cannot blame them. They had no direction. They did not know what they did not know. They were not challenged. But since then, we have filed for 191 patents, with half of these submitted by the researchers who were here before I joined. When I looked at the profile of the people back then, I saw that they were good guys. They just needed direction, to be shown the right way and given the right tools."

Today, Mimos has the buzz and feel of an organisation that has discovered for the first time the sense of responsibility that comes from fulfilling the lofty expectations the country has of it. "When I first came in, the people were crawling. Now they are walking, but I am getting them ready to start running," a confident Abdul Wahab tells *netv@lue2.0* when it visited Mimos recently.

Indeed, running is what Malaysia has to do to catch up with the rest of the world. As a former CEO of a multinational corporation's (MNC) research outfit, Abdul Wahab is very much aware of where Malaysia stands in the high-tech game and what needs to be done to play the game. "We are behind and we need to leapfrog. We don't just want to be jaguh kampung," he says.

Hence the strategy of Mimos to build its own technology platforms in niche areas. Once these are in place, Abdul Wahab plans collaborations with various parties.

Mimos today is focusing its research on applied areas of cyberspace security, encryption systems, grid computing and multi-service networks, wireless broadband, MEMS/NEMS systems, advanced informatics, knowledge technology and micro energy systems.

It looks like Mimos has a lot on its plate, especially when the goal is to develop frontier technologies in these areas and not "me too" solutions and services.

Abdul Wahab is confident Mimos can pull it off, mainly because it will work with partners to leverage their capabilities and not do it all by itself. The three sets of partners are MNCs, foreign research institutes and universities and local entrepreneurs. "We are using the 80:20 rule, where 80% of the work is done by collaborators and the rest by Mimos. But to do this well, we have to upgrade the capabilities of our people so that we can quickly learn from our various collaborations and lead the way," says Abdul Wahab.

This same approach will be used when Mimos works with industry on the "development" component. The aim is for industry to look at what technology Mimos has and work on adapting that to market needs. Mimos is also helping local industry penetrate overseas markets by linking it with companies overseas.

Explaining how this works, Abdul Wahab says when any of Mimos' overseas technology partners are interested in a particular technology, he asks them to find a company in their country to partner a Malaysian company to get the product ready for the market. "This way, we introduce our companies to overseas partners and markets."

Also, Mimos is concentrating on areas consistent with the technology and innovation road map drawn by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, which means there is a clear direction for what it will do. For example, Abdul Wahab feels that universities are islands of research but with the technology road map in place and more importantly, the technology platforms Mimos has developed, the research at universities can be more focused.

Technology platforms are packaged core technologies that can be further developed into products with added features to the hardware or software. For instance, one technology platform Mimos has developed is the Semantic Search Engine, which it has since licensed *to a number of software firms and even government-linked companies like Telekom Malaysia Bhd (see Page 2).*

The next technology platform Mimos aims to develop is grid computing. Abdul Wahab is planning a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with three leading technology vendors to work on cloud computing based on the grid, which he calls "the next infrastructure", like what broadband is today. "This MoU will enable us to work on state-of-the-art technology. We don't want to be jaguh kampung anymore," he says.

Looks like Abdul Wahab is dead serious about remaking Mimos into an outfit that can run.

*Comments: feedback@bizedge.com*