

Headline **A guy you can bet on**
Date **05 Apr 2010**
MediaTitle **The Edge**
Section **NetV@lue 2.0**
Journalist **N/A**
Frequency **Weekly**
Circ / Read **25,041 /**

Language **English**
Page No **3**
Article Size **263 cm²**
Color **Full Color**
ADValue **4,703**
PRValue **14,109**



A guy you can bet on

I was so wrong about Datuk Abdul Wahab Abdullah. I first met him in January 2007, about six months after he had taken over as CEO of MIMOS Bhd. Well, he had grand plans and big dreams about making it the premier R&D hub for the nation's ICT sector.

I came away thinking to myself that Wahab obviously did not know the deep lethargy that permeated the organisation he had taken over. I thought he would end up disillusioned, and worse, just cruise in the job.

Having covered ICT since January 2000, I can say that the pre-Wahab-era MIMOS, under the leadership of its first CEO Tengku Tengku Azman Shariffadeen, was a waste of time and public money. It too talked grandly but never delivered, and kept milking the fact that it brought the Internet

to Malaysia in 1994. In fact, I consider Tengku Azman's appointment to be former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's biggest mistake among all the ICT decisions he made.

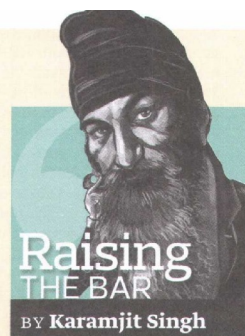
I am glad Wahab's appointment has turned out to be a stroke of genius. I have written before about how he has transformed the company that advises the government on technology matters. And when I asked him recently how he had transformed the culture at MIMOS, he said he had brought over 40 top talents from multinationals here into the research and management part of the organisation. The key was in having good leaders who can lead, he says. With the top setting the tone and pace, the rest either shape up or ship out.

Still, it is hard for people outside the ICT industry to appreciate the

transformation he has engineered. But I feel that he has done as good a job as Datuk Idris Jala did at MAS. Because MIMOS is not in the public eye, Wahab's work there has gone unnoticed. But he doesn't mind. He is not one to seek publicity.

He is driven by desire and fear. Fear because his experience over the past three years has shown that Malaysian entrepreneurs are not thinking global and do not appreciate the importance of intellectual property. To him, this means that Malaysians will have little hope of ever playing with the "big boys" or creating dominant market positions. Where others are running and running fast, we are walking and seemingly content with that.

But Wahab wants our entrepreneurs and companies to fly high. Covering



him these past three years, I feel he has done enough to earn both the ICT industry and government's trust, that he will deliver strong results if given the financial support in the 10th Malaysia Plan.

In fact, when I last met him three weeks ago, he was preparing to state his case to the Economic Planning

Unit for the allocation he wants. With money so tight, he hopes allocations will be made based on an agency's track record during the 9MP. He alluded to the fact that some agencies with no track record are asking for crazy amounts.

MIMOS has that strong track record, not just in terms of patents filed, number of companies jostling to be its technology recipients, or in the fact that its technology is coveted by global technology companies. The ace up its sleeve is Wahab, an outstanding leader, an inspirational people person and a passionate and loyal Malaysian. We can trust him with our money. His mindset when it comes to spending public funds can be read in the following quote. "At MIMOS, the aim is to turn a million ringgit into a billion." **E**