

Headline **The RM1bil man**
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The RM1bil man

Karamjit Singh

You could call Datuk Abdul Wahab Abdulah the RM1 billion man. For that is the seemingly audacious target he has set for himself and his management team at Mimos Bhd. And this is not revenue for Mimos. He is talking about revenue for Mimos technology partners. And, he is not going to use funny numbers to come up with the RM1 billion at the end of the year either. "I am talking about Malaysian companies that will have RM1 billion in purchase orders in hand by end-December 2010." This is probably the first time the CEO of an agency under the Ministry of Science Technology and Innovation (Mosti) has publicly stated such a bold target.

His rationale is simple and reveals his multinational corporation DNA (he previously ran Motorola's global design centre in Penang). "We cannot move into the global market if we do not set such high expectations for ourselves," he says.

Three years after becoming CEO of Mimos, and with a new contract for another three years, Wahab is determined to push Malaysian companies global and banish the Jaguh Kampung mentality he sees dominating many of them. The goal for his management team is to commercialise all the technologies they are working on in the eight clusters Mimos is championing (see sidebar).

Mimos itself is playing on the world stage now. It is ranked in the top 5% of organisations in the world with CMMI 5 (Capability Maturity Model Integration) certified staff. This is a globally recognised accreditation for process improvement in software.

Its technology has also been acknowledged

as being at the leading edge. For instance, Wahab shares that Microsoft is working with Mimos to license a technology Wahab calls "drag and drop", to be used in a major product Microsoft is going to launch. And a senior executive of a leading security company came to visit Mimos and left so impressed that the company is now working with Mimos to use some

of its technology in the former's products. Perhaps Wahab is proudest of the fact that Motorola is now paying to use the Mimos grid platform to conduct advanced design/simulation work instead of doing this over its global network. The quality and reliability of the grid has to be impeccable.

Its key people are also receiving recognition. Its newly appointed chief technology officer Thillai Raj was invited by Stanford to review some of its doctoral engineering students' theses. While there, Raj was also invited to give a lecture on what Mimos and Malaysia are doing in technology. The comment Raj got the most after his talk was, "Wow, we didn't know Malaysia was doing such interesting things in technology."

All this may be fine and nice but Wahab is already impatient, waiting for Malaysian companies to take on the world. His main beef is that they do not recognise the value of intellectual property (IP). "If you don't have your own IP, you can

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Mimos building critical technology platforms

FROM PAGE 1

forget about playing in the global arena," he says. He now wants to grab them by the scruff of the neck and take them global. "Three of our partners (Mimos calls them technology recipients) are already earning revenue overseas. We expect to take three more global this year."

These companies will all have products and solutions built on Malaysian-owned IP and technology platforms that Mimos has built. To Wahab, these technology platforms are critical components of building the technology eco-system in Malaysia (see roadmap charts on pages 2 and 3). He says that a product can only solve problems, it cannot move market segments like a technology platform can.

"This is a critical component that is lacking in Malaysia. We don't want to keep depending on foreign-owned technology forever." He cites the example of the Ministry of Education which gave a RM400 million contract to a Malaysian company. When Mimos wanted to work with the company to help them build their technology further and to take it global, they discovered to their disappointment that it was a mere reseller who did not own the technology. Clearly Wahab wants to see an end to these types of deals.

No surprise then that one objective he has for this year is to ensure some of their technology is used by the government. He says most of the government's expenditure in IT flows out of the country. Mimos believes its technology and innovations can help stem this outflow. It is aiming to file 100 patents a year, and he stresses that the patents they file go through an internal process in which the potential patents are vigorously evaluated before a panel approves them for a filing. The aim is not to file patents to chase numbers, but to file patents that add blocks to the technology eco-system Mimos is building.

"We have to build the total value chain ourselves, and I believe we can do that. Some of our technology already works across our different platforms. For instance, our agriculture solution works by using our Mems, wireless, semantic and security platforms," he says.

Engaging mathematicians

An immediate goal this year is to launch the next generation of www.mastic.gov.my. This is a website that lists all research being done by academicians in Malaysia. Mimos is about to

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inject the site with its semantic engine, which according to Wahab will add intelligence to the site. (Semantic search uses semantics, or the science of meaning in language, to produce highly relevant search results. In most cases

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the goal is to deliver the information requested by a user rather than have a user sort through a list of loosely related keyword results.)

With the new search engine, one will be able to compare what other universities are doing in a similar area of research, locate clusters of experts in particular areas and be able to map any piece of research going on in Malaysia with research going on globally in the same area.

A new area Mimos is working on this year is to engage a group of mathematicians, all PhD holders, with real-life technology development research. "We are linking them to work we are doing in our labs. The idea is to get them to help us build performance into our products and platforms." The group consists of academicians

at local universities. Mimos decided not to hire them away from their present jobs and create a staffing gap in the universities. Wahab says the mathematicians are thrilled to be working with Mimos and excited that their talent is being recognised outside of academia.

With his ambition of building Malaysian-owned platform technologies on which Malaysian companies can then built products and services that can scale globally well under way, and a highly motivated team buying into his vision, Malaysians can expect more great things to come from Mimos.

Next week: The three lessons learnt by Wahab, and Raising the Bar urges the government to put their trust in him.

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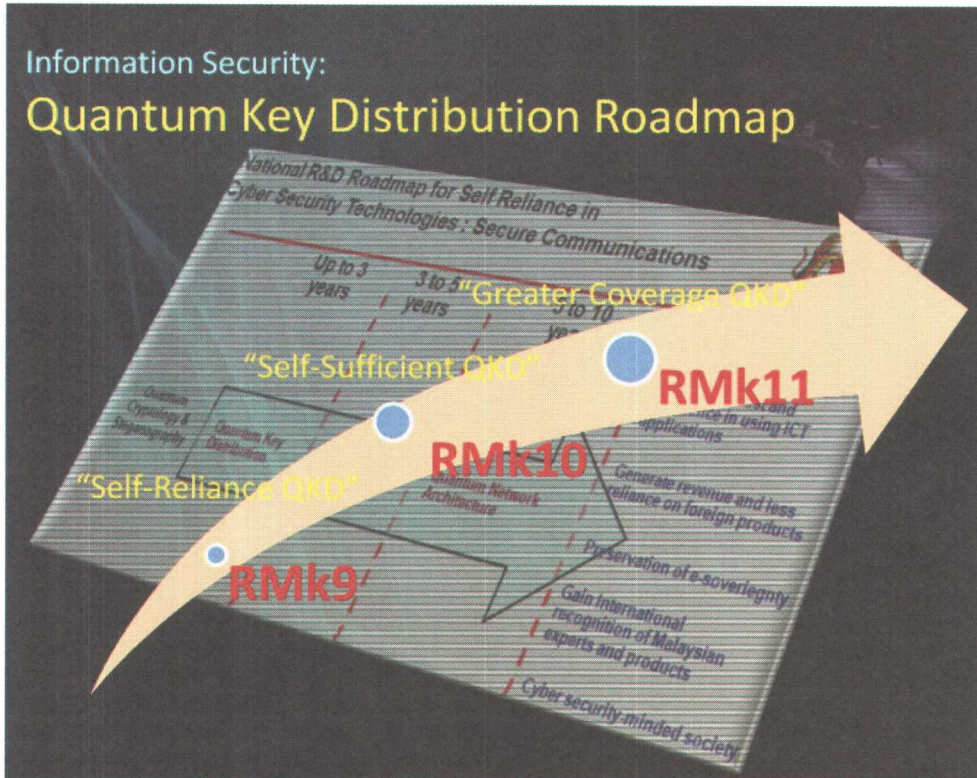
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Chart 1



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Chart 2

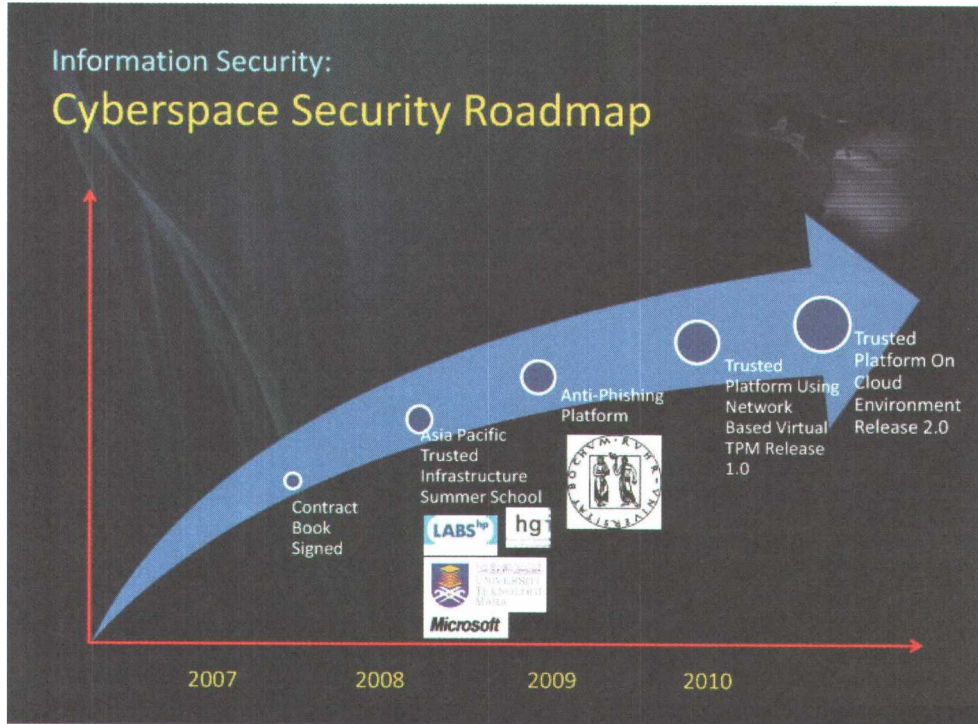


Chart 3



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Chart 4

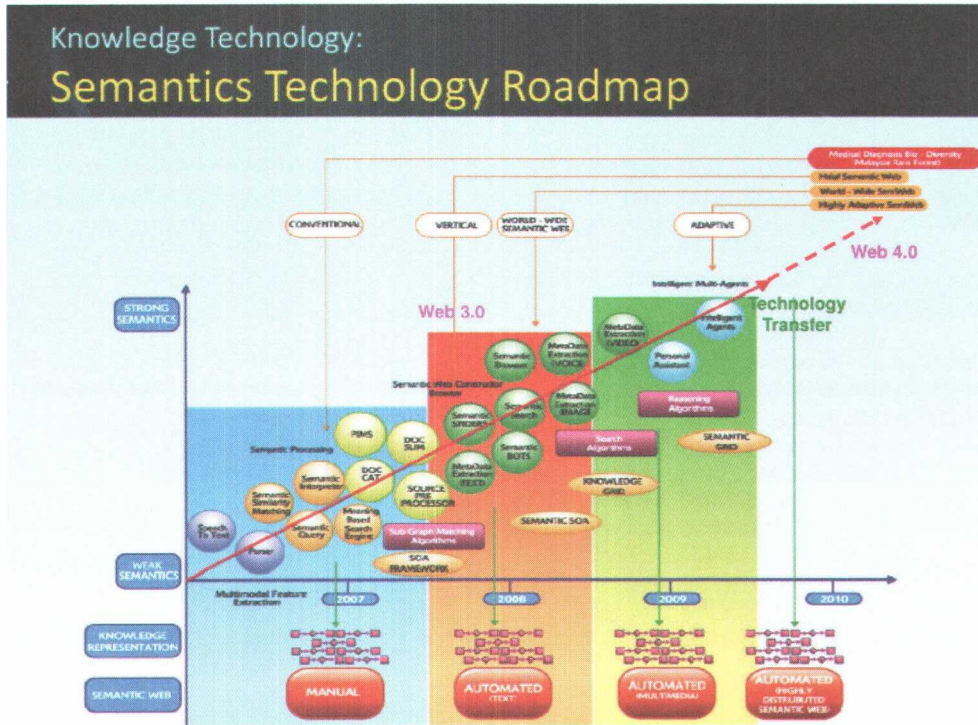


Chart 5

