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Everest success shows Malaysians really `boleh`

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THE "MALAYSIA Boleh" campaign was first launched in 1993 for the Singapore Sea Games. It was relaunched in 1995 for the Chiangmai Sea Games.

And it has become a national battle cry, not only in sports but in almost all facets of Malaysian life. And it was on top of the Everest at 2.10pm (Malaysian time) on May 23 that "Malaysia Boleh" was most evident.

Climbing the Everest is no ordinary feat. It is no small mountain and extremely difficult to scale. Still, 23 Malaysians took up the challenge and showed determination and grit, as a team, to succeed.

Defying the odds, Mr M. Magendran set foot on the summit to plant the Malaysian flag atop the 8,848m snow-capped mountain. He was joined 15 minutes later by Mr N. Mohandas.

They were part of a final four-member team which began the ascent to the summit from South Col, otherwise known as Base Camp Four, located at altitude 8,000m.

The Malaysians were not trying to be heroes. They climbed Everest not because it was there. And it was not a "flag-waving mission" as some critics have described the Projek Malaysia-Everest 97 to be.

It was a response to a challenge by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who believed that there is nothing Malaysians cannot do as a team.

This is, indeed, team spirit at its best and the determination of Malaysians to do it.

Malaysians proved that they are capable of doing whatever they set their hearts on if there is determination, discipline and the will to work as a team.

The latest feat will certainly inspire Malaysians to set records not only in mountain climbing but also in other fields which can bring about world acclaim and recognition.

And, Malaysians, too, will be able to move forward with greater confidence in whatever vocation, especially towards nation-building.

There are many exemplary achievements of what Malaysians can do if they put their minds to it.

One such achievement is the Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional (Proton), which was the target of many critics when it rolled off its first car, the Proton Saga, in July 1985. The critics have since been silent as Proton moves from strength to strength, manufacturing other models. Besides Proton, DRB-Hicom and Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua have since joined the list of car manufacturers and assemblers in the country.

The Iswara, Wira, Perdana, Putra, Rusa, Kancil and the Satria are making Malaysia a proud motor vehicle manufacturer both locally and abroad. As at November last year, 136,951 Proton cars are on the roads in 39 countries.

Another example is the Vision 2020, Dr Mahathir's blueprint to turn Malaysia into a developed nation. When it was first unveiled on February 28 1991, many were very fast to shred the blueprint to pieces.

But Malaysians have shown that the Vision 2020 is not merely Dr Mahathir's grand design for the country. In fact, economic growth targets set out under Vision 2020 have been met or surpassed.

Gross domestic product grew at an average of 8.6 per cent a year, higher than the targeted 7 per cent. The economy has also enjoyed more than full employment. Manufacturing now contributes over 80 per cent to exports and provides 34 per cent of all jobs.

These are indeed some of the successes of the people and the nation. A year ago yesterday when launching the Project Malaysia-Everest 97, Dr Mahathir said:

"Only people who are willing to take up challenges and who do not give up till they achieve their goals will become a success.

"A race which is prepared to struggle to achieve its goals will become developed and respected by other races in the world."

Malaysians have proven that they are a race that have the spirit - the spirit to face challenges and succeed.

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