

11/07/1997

Many other Everests to scale

D. Devika Bai

AND so, Malaysians have conquered Mt Everest. All 8,848 metres of it. Syabas! to the team members. They have done the country proud.

It must feel great basking in the limelight and receiving the adulation of a nation. After all, it's no ordinary task scaling the world's highest peak.

But come to think of it, life is full of "Everests." There are many Malaysians out there conquering a different kind of Everest every day. Or at least trying very hard to do so.

Life's Everests are infinitely higher, its facets unimaginably sheerer and its pitfalls abysmally deeper.

Whereas to lose your footing on the one is to lose your life, to lose your footing on the other is to lose your very soul.

Right from the start, there are many Everests to be conquered. A newborn has survived the odds when it cries lustily upon birth. Baby's first step, a child's first day at school and its mastering of the alphabet are great achievements in their own way. School children passing internal and external examinations mean reaching a peak of sorts.

Youths going through the trial-ridden transitional phase between childhood and adulthood and emerging unscarred have conquered. And "lepak-ers", "bohshias" and closet-smokers struggling to kick their habits are almost there. All they need is understanding and support to reach the top.

The thief who has turned over a new leaf has reached lofty heights. So has the reformed drug addict and the ex-alcohol abuser.

Parents, especially single parents, who have overcome the adversities of life to bring up their children as loyal, useful citizens, have scaled their Everest.

Some others who have reached the pinnacle are the disabled who have triumphed against all odds to lead fruitful lives. And somewhere out there are folks who have overcome racial and religious prejudices and courageously extended the hand of friendship to all people, no matter what colour or creed.

Our first Prime Minister, the Tunku, and his cohorts reached the apex when they won the struggle for independence. With the groundwork - the "base camps" as it were - prepared by subsequent Prime Ministers, our present dynamic leader Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his team have taken the country to dizzying heights undreamed of 40 years ago.

Only the rakyat can give the final push to the summit by staying steadfastly united, displaying strong moral fibre, shedding extremist views, saying "no" to graft and corruption and electing wise, capable and just leaders.

Can the rakyat surmount its Everest?

(END)