

31/08/1998

Dr Mahathir leads convoy of Proton cars

PENANG, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today led a convoy of 2,713 Proton cars across the 13.4km Penang Bridge - the longest bridge in Asia.

Organised by Edaran Otomobil Nasional Berhad, the event was to signify the "Malaysia Boleh" spirit and the curtain raiser for tomorrow's National Day parade being held for the first time in Penang.

At a simple reception before the flag-off, DRB-Hicom group chairman Tan Sri Mohd Salleh Sulong said: "This event with the Prime Minister leading the convoy symbolises that the people are behind Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir in crossing the bridge over economic problems.

"We the people of Malaysia, irrespective of race and religion, will continuously support the Prime Minister in his efforts to lead the nation out of the turmoil."

About 100 people who were at the reception then read an oath: "We, the people of Malaysia, believe that Malaysia can overcome the economic turmoil under the leadership of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Our Nation, Our Responsibility. Malaysia Boleh."

Despite slight rain, hundreds of people lined Jalan Tunku Kudin to wave to Dr Mahathir and the long line of cars that trailed him back to the city centre just after the bridge interchange on Penang island.

A crowd gathered at the Prai toll plaza as early as 3.30pm to watch the convoy take off. Many were surprised to see the Prime Minister at the wheels and cheered him on.

Edaran Otomobil Nasional Berhad managing director Datuk Adzmi Abdul Wahab, who was a passenger in the car driven by Dr Mahathir, said later the Prime Minister expressed happiness at the support given by the people.

Adzmi told reporters: "This is the longest single brand car convoy in the world. We will apply that this event be listed in the Malaysia Book of Records and the Guinness Book of Records as the longest convoy of a single brand of cars ever."

Dr Mahathir was flagged off by Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon at the Prai toll plaza at 5.30pm.

He drove a Proton Wira - a replica of the one which was parachuted down at the North Pole earlier this year - with DRB-Hicom group chairman Tan Sri Mohd Salleh Sulong next to him and Adzmi behind.

In the second car were Dr Mahathir's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Ali, Salleh's wife Puan Sri Akmal Abdul Salam and Adzmi's wife Datin Ramlah Hashim.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail were in the third car.

Koh, Information Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Rahmat and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Paduka Rafidah Aziz and several deputy ministers followed in other cars.

Also in the convoy were 30 children from the Rumah Tunas Harapan Tengku Ampuan Rahimah in Kuala Selangor. They had been brought in to participate by Airport Limo Sdn Bhd. Another 30 children waited at Shangri-la Hotel to greet Dr Mahathir.

Meanwhile, lucky participants among the 1,100 who paid RM100 to register and who sent entries for a slogan contest organised by EON, stand to win a Proton Iswara Aeroback 1.3S (grand prize), RM5,000 (first prize), RM3,000 (second prize) and 24 consolation prizes of RM500. The results would be

announced later, said Adzmi.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah tonight attended a Royal Banquet for the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar Ibni Al-Marhum Tuanku Abdul Rahman and Raja Permaisuri Tuanku Najihah at the Equatorial Hotel.