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Mazlan another success story for women

By Hanizah Hashim

HER name was mentioned first by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he spoke of achievements of Malaysian women at the Umno general assembly in May.

Although Dr Mahathir also named other high achiever women, many would have been forgiven if they had thought Mazlan was a man. Her name was coined from Malaysia and New Zealand.

Professor Datuk Dr Mazlan Othman is the first woman from a developing country to have been appointed director of United Nation's Office for Outer Space Affairs in Vienna, Austria.

The former director-general of the Outer Space Studies Division of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, Mazlan makes Malaysia proud with her appointment.

First suggested by Malaysia's permanent representative to the United Nations Datuk Hasmy Agam, Mazlan was chosen from over 100 international candidates but it was really no surprise.

Already a well-known figure in Malaysia, Mazlan was instrumental in setting up the National Planetarium and spreading the message on the importance of space science.

During her two-year stint in Vienna, which is more diplomatic than managerial, Mazlan oversees UN space activities to promote peaceful uses of space and space technology.

Mazlan's appointment is a great boost for Malaysia's space studies as she will have access to global resources on the use of space technology to benefit Government and industry.

Involved in putting forward Malaysia's interest in space laws and its administration since 1994, she is fully aware of concerns on use of space technology.

Many countries now venture into space for their own strategic or commercial interests as space technology is used in communications, education, remote sensing and small satellite missions.

Malaysia ventured into space with the launch of the Measat I and Measat II satellites and the soon-to-be launched Made-in-Malaysia Tiung-sat I micro-satellite.

A native of Seremban, Mazlan shone in studies and sports at Tunku Kurshiah College before leaving for University of Otago in New Zealand where she specialised in astrophysics.

After obtaining her doctorate, Mazlan returned to serve at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Department of Applied Physics until her appointment as director-general.

During her nine years at the ministry, Mazlan helped establish the National Planetarium, which remains an inspiration for Malaysian schoolchildren to take up space science.

While Dr Mahathir chose Mazlan as a source of inspiration for women in Umno, she is a source of inspiration for Malaysians of all races, gender and age that "Malaysia Boleh" indeed.

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