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`Woman with right qualities can be leader'

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Is it possible for a woman to become the country's Prime Minister?

This was one of the questions posed to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad by a student during a dialogue session between him and students of the International Islamic University in Gombak today.

The question was asked by Suhaiza Zakaria, a pre-law matriculation student.

Suhaiza said that women were the pillars of the nation.

And Dr Mahathir replied:

"To be the country's main pillar, you must be able to support lots of heavy things - the floor, the roof and etc...

"As such you have to be strong."

Just like men, Dr Mahathir said the strength of a woman lay on her knowledge, skills and willingness to struggle, work hard and to bear responsibilities.

"You must also know a lot about good leadership to make a good leader, so acquire and accumulate as much knowledge and understanding as you can, not only in universities but throughout your entire lifetime," he said.

If a woman possesses all these capabilities, Dr Mahathir said, then the country can have a woman Prime Minister.

"But not during my time," he said in jest, and quickly added: "In future, we hope to identify such a woman, but until then, try your best and good luck."

Dr Mahathir spent almost two hours to deliver his address and to field questions from students.

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