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PM: Walk across the Antarctica

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LANGKAWI, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today threw a challenge to Malaysians to walk across the Antarctica and create another victory for the nation.

He said young people in the country should emulate the achievement of foreigners who had crossed the coldest continent in the world.

Dr Mahathir said coming from a place with a warm climate should not be used as an excuse by Malaysians that they would not be able to take up the challenge.

"Surely this (the attempt) is dangerous. Everything can be dangerous. We can even meet with an accident and die while driving," he said.

Dr Mahathir said if Malaysians undertook the Antarctica challenge, they would become physically and mentally strong and would be satisfied with their achievement.

"The nation, too, will be proud of their capabilities," he said at a Press conference after welcoming national marathon swimmer Abdul Malik Mydin at the Kuah jetty, here.

He was asked on other form of challenges which he wanted to see Malaysians to undertake besides the achievement of Datuk Azhar Mansor who sailed across the world and that of Malik's.

Malik's Kuala Perlis-Kuah challenge was to prepare him for the English Channel Challenge 2003 which he will undertake in August.

The Prime Minister also challenged the younger generation to improve discipline, upgrade their training and go for competitions with the "Malaysia Boleh" spirit.

He said it was meaningless to shout "Malaysia Boleh" if the people themselves were not capable.

Earlier, when welcoming Malik, Dr Mahathir said that an achievement like Malik's should be a challenge to young people to bring other successes to the nation.

"It is not easy for someone to swim 48km through the night and with limited food.

"But his spirit is high and he did 58 strokes per minute to reach here nearly four hours earlier than expected," he added.

On an unrelated matter, Dr Mahathir said the Government would not force employers in the private sector to pay bonus to their staff as businesses of many companies were affected by the world economic slowdown.

"But, those in the private sector who can afford can pay (bonus)," he added.