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High achievers put nation on world map

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IT is unfortunate that many do not realise the significance of the words 'Malaysia Boleh'. Worse still, there are some Malaysians out there who made a mockery of the whole concept, coming up with terms like 'Bolehland', 'Malaysia Tak Boleh' and such.

But there are those who take this concept to heart. And these are the people that make us proud to be Malaysians.

When Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad introduced the concept in the early 90s, he told Malaysians that the only thing preventing them from fulfilling their potential was the mind. And how true he was.

Malaysians have succeeded in doing many things; from swimming across the English channel to climbing Mount Everest and exploring the cold, and challenging Antarctic. And from chefs to entertainers and interior designers, our local professionals have indeed made their mark globally, earning much respect from their counterparts.

Holding on to the words of Malaysia Boleh, these brave men and women have helped raise the Jalur Gemilang in foreign lands and singing Negaraku aloud in countries that don't even speak Malay.

In the past year alone, we have produced Malaysian high achievers who have done our country proud.

Marathon swimmer Abdul Malik Mydin reached the shore of Cap Gris Nez in Calais, France early this month to become the first Malaysian to swim across the English Channel.

Malik, who will be conferred the Darjah Setia Pangkuan Negeri (DSPN) award, which carries the title 'Datuk', by the Penang State Government completed the feat in just under 18 hours.

We also have 26-year-old Mohd Nizam Aman who completed the longest solo drive around Peninsular Malaysia in just 50 hours and 20 minutes.

Nizam, who hails from Felda Palong 7 started his 3,507km in Bandar Sri Jempol, Negri Sembilan on Aug 15.

On the music front, Malaysian rapmetal band Pop Shuvit are all ready to take the United States by storm when they promote their debut album there soon.

Its members - MC Moots, MC Point, Rudy (drums), A.J. (bass), J.D. (guitar, vocals) and DJ Uno (turntables) - have secured a deal with independent US-based record label Phat House Records to distribute their maiden effort, "Take It & Shuvit", there.

And let's not forget our very own interior designer Khuan Chew who brought the Burj Al-Arab in Dubai to greater heights through her artistic touch.

Her unique touch has ensured that the posh interior of the world's only seven-star hotel more than matches its majestic facade.

Early this year, our very own singing chef, Chef Wan, has again made Malaysia proud by becoming the first Asian to receive the prestigious La Mazille Prix honorary award for his efforts in promoting Asia to the world through his culinary skills.

Presented by the French Government at the annual Gourmand World Food, Wine & TV Cook Shows Festival held on Feb 28 in Anger, west of France, he also bagged the "Overall Best TV Presenter Award" in the Asian category.

This year's awards ceremony also saw Chef Wan creating history as the first Asian to host the glittering gala show held for the fourth year by

the internationally-renowned Gourmand International based in Madrid, Spain.

Malaysian surgeons also set another milestone in the history of medicine last year when they performed surgery while separating conjoined twins Azama and Azami Kamarul Zaman at the Kuala Lumpur Hospital.

The surgery involved the reconstruction of a biliary drainage system, possibly the first in the world. It was a 19-hour surgery, led by paediatric surgeon Dr Zakaria Zahari together with his team of 33 doctors.

On the expedition front, Universiti Sains Malaysia's (USM) Assoc Prof Dr Zulfigar Yasin led a team of Malaysian scientists to the Antarctic early this year.

The team, comprising planktologist Dr Wan Maznah Wan Omar, invertebrae taxonomist Sazlina Md Salleh and marine biologist Mahadi Mohamad had been part of a multinational expedition comprising 41 scientists from 17 countries who had sailed 15,000 nautical miles covering about a third of the cold continent.

The 73-day expedition was logged as the longest marine scientific voyage.

The spirit of 'Malaysia Boleh' has even managed to burn the passion of many Malaysians, regardless of age, gender and race to prove their worth.

Former television compere Ras Adiba Radzi, who is now paralysed, left Johor Baru on Aug 7 on a mission to complete the 2003 Wheelchair Challenge.

Accompanied by Paralympic athletes Mat Sani Harun, 21, and Amlı Ramsah, 30, they completed the journey over 400km journey in just three weeks.

And in true blue patriot spirit, we also have 63-year-old Zakaria Johan, who has been flying the Jalur Gemilang outside his house without fail every year on Aug 1 for the duration of the Merdeka month celebrations.

When we believe in the concept of Malaysia Boleh, it is an indication that we are truly proud to be Malaysians.