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`Malaysia Boleh' not empty slogan: PM

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"MALAYSIA BOLEH" is a constructive mindset that has been proven effective in firing up the spirits of Malaysians and not merely an empty slogan, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said in his speech at the Malaysian Institute of Directors' (MID) 2003 Banquet in Putrajaya last night.

"`Malaysia Boleh' is an not empty slogan, it is actually possible to do almost anything that other people can do, given the time, given the will, given the willingness to work hard, we can do almost anything and this has been proven," Dr Mahathir said

The MID banquet was held to pay tribute to Dr Mahathir as the chief executive officer (CEO) of Malaysia Inc and to his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali for being the beacon of strength for the Prime Minister.

Speaking before more than 700 members of the MID present at the banquet, Dr Mahathir said the `Malaysia Boleh' slogan carried more weight and meaning now as Malaysians realised the strength of a positive mindset.

"I think the slogan "Malaysia Boleh" has really caught on and sometimes when I'm abroad I do find foreigners saying "Boleh" ... they can, so it is a state of mind really, a mindset that has to be inculcated so that we can do the things that we want to do.

"Trust me, we have done quite a lot of things and in fact, sometimes the implementers are way ahead of the person who originated the idea," the Prime Minister said, drawing attention to the level of scepticism that was prevalent when the national car project was announced in the early 1980s.

On his experience as the CEO of Malaysia Inc, Dr Mahathir said that the most important element in ensuring the effectiveness of any CEO was a formidable team of managers and implementers.

"It is the people, who can understand and interpret what you say and actually implement those things, that will really make things happen. Without them, you can have the best brains in the world, the best CEO in the world but nothing will really happen," the Prime Minister said, paying tribute to all those who have worked with him and made his ideas and visions a reality.

Dr Mahathir also pointed out the negative human tendency or rather the culture of scepticism that is widespread in almost all levels of the society, including the media.

He said that although Malaysia is gifted with a good pool of talents and implementers, the sceptics were always there to shoot down ideas or at least criticise them.

"Usually there is a great amount of scepticism, at least that was my experience. Whenever we suggest something or I suggest something, those who are supposed to implement them are very sceptical, the public also very sceptical, and the newspapers are the most sceptical of all and they never agreed that we can do anything at all.

"I remember very well when we decided that we should manufacture our own national car, the number of people who were completely convinced that this was a mad idea was impossible to count ... everybody thought that we could never manufacture our own national car, but today, of course people take for granted that 80 per cent of the passenger vehicles on our roads are made in Malaysia, by Malaysians," he said.

Earlier, MID president Tan Sri Dr Lim Kok Wing paid tribute to Dr Mahathir for being a true leader of Malaysia.

Lim said that Dr Mahathir has not only led the nation to greater heights during his tenure, but has also set a clear path for the future generation.

"Today, on behalf of Corporate Malaysia, we salute the Prime Minister for all that you have done for us, and express to you our gratitude for all the sacrifices you must have made. For all the battles that you must have fought, for all the headaches that you must have suffered, in order to groom us up to be and place us at where we are today," he added.

During the function, Dr Siti Hasmah was also presented with a poem entitled "A Woman of Strength" - for her role as the "Woman Behind The Successful Man".