

Power team in New York

BY JOHAN FERNANDEZ

NEW YORK: They are some of Malaysia's most powerful business leaders and their aim was to impress fund managers here to put their money in Malaysia.

At the end of the one-day roadshow, they think they managed to get their message across.

Members of the delegation were Datuk Azman Mokhtar of Khazanah Nasional Bhd, Tan Sri Francis Yeoh of YTL Corporation, Ralph Marshall of Usaha Tegas Sdn Bhd, Datuk Ahmad Zubir of Sime Darby, Tan Sri K.T. Lim of Genting Bhd, Datuk Nazir Razak of CIMB Bhd, Datuk Tony Fernandes of AirAsia and George Ratilal of Petronas.

Led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, they took questions head-on to demonstrate an open and transparent approach.

Fund managers were surprised at the ease with which the team interacted with each other and their unity of purpose in promoting Malaysia.

Datuk Azman Mokhtar, managing director of Khazanah Nasional Bhd, said Abdullah's presence and his frank and direct answers played a vital role in their mission.

"It is not often that a prime minister of country is involved in this kind of discussion and he really created an impression. There were no questions that were not answered," he said.

"Many were not aware of Malaysia," he added.

He said there was a lot of genuine interest by the participants.

Tan Sri Francis Yeoh of YTL Corporation said that this should be done more often.

"It is a good way to tell the Malaysian story" he said.

He said the whole group represented companies that had a total market capitalisation of

RM250bil.

He said that attempts should be made to get the US media to such shows.

Ralph Marshall, deputy chairman and group CEO of Astro All-Asia Networks Plc, said that the two issues the Prime Minister was asked and dealt with reasonably well was domestic investment, an area of concern for the institutional investor and fiscal consolidation of domestic investment.

He said there was an overall feeling that the Malaysian economy was "not as exciting for the stock market" and it was now too defensive.

Sime Darby's Group CEO, Datuk Ahmad Zubir Murshid said there was a lot of misconception about Malaysia in the plantation sector.

"But we came out strongly and showed that Malaysian corporate leaders were strongly behind the Government," he said.

AirAsia's Tony Fernandes said that from feedback he got, the people were genuinely impressed that there was such openness and transparency.

"This is a great way to start the whole re-branding, repositioning and new PR effort to bring Malaysia to the forefront," he said.

Khairy Jamaluddin, ECM Libra director of corporate advisory, has described the event here as successful and the one in London as "a bit disappointing".

He said the delegation was out to sell Malaysia but it was a long-term process and "don't expect the stock market to jump".

Abdullah said the Government would support the private sector so that the economic sector would be more robust.

The road show was organised by Merrill Lynch and ECM Libra, a premier boutique investment banking group.



FRIENDLY MEETING: Abdullah receiving Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo for their bilateral meeting in New York on Tuesday. — *Bernamapic*