

Former student returns to college as Prime Minister

OUR PROUDEST DAY ... these Kolej Sultan Abdul Hamid pupils are crowding around a very special "old boy" who called at the college after 15 years.

The first time Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad set foot on the college was as a Standard One pupil in 1932 (59 years ago) — the last time was in 1976 as Education Minister.

Yesterday, he returned to his alma mater as Prime Minister for the first time — and the pupils, understandably, did not want to let him leave.

The occasion was the college's speech and prize-giving day — described by principal Haji Hassan Hashim as "our proudest day ever" due to Dr Mahathir's presence.

"There's nothing better to remind one of his childhood than to return to his alma mater. The memories are flooding back," was Dr Mahathir's response.

Dr Mahathir gave a \$1.6 million grant for the school to repair some dilapidated buildings.

Dr Mahathir earlier reminisced about his student days at the college which was then known as the Government English School.

"I was among the 30 pupils fortunate enough to get an education (at the

school) then, though thousands of other children were equally capable," he said, recalling the daily *langca* (trisha) rides to school with his brother from his Seberang Perak home.

"But I used to walk back home bare-footed after evening classes. My father only bought us an *ayam*-brand bicycle when I reached Standard Six. And that only after much crying."

Dr Mahathir said the teachers during his time were all bestowed the "title" *Pak* by the students and among the teachers were *Pak Pin*, *Pak Tong*, *Pak Mutu* and *Pak Chye*.

"Most of the college's students then had no problems finding jobs. Students who completed their Senior Cambridge would meet the state secretary who told them to become clerks or technical assistants," he said.

The Prime Minister also explained his Vision 2020: "The vision is for the schoolchildren of today who must now equip themselves with all the skills."

A highlight of the day was the presentation of the *Iskandar Award* after a lapse of 13 years. The award is in memory of Dr Mahathir's father, Encik Mohamad Iskandar, who was also the college's first principal.