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CM, ex-judge conferred doctorates

PENANG, Sat. - Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and former court judge Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Zain were conferred honorary doctorates at Universiti Sains Malaysia's 26th convocation today.

Koh, 48, received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree while Abdul Aziz, who is well known for his landmark Aziz Report which reviewed the teaching service in the early 1970s, was conferred an honorary Doctor of Science degree.

Meanwhile, Malaysian AIDS council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir was conferred an honorary Master of Arts degree.

They received their scrolls from USM Pro-Chancellor Tun Daim Zainuddin who represented the Raja of Perlis, who is Chancellor, during the first session of the convocation today.

Present at the ceremony were the Penang Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Dr Hamdan Sheikh Tahir and his consort, Toh Puan Siti Zainab Baharuddin, the Prime Minister's wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, and Koh's wife, Puan Sri Chui Kah Peng.

Also present were former Chief Minister Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu who is also USM Pro-Chancellor, USM council president Tan Sri Ani Arope and Vice-Chancellor Datuk Prof Ishak Tambi Kechik.

A total of 580 students are receiving their various degrees today and tomorrow. They include 19 with doctorates, 294 with master's and bachelor's degrees and 267 with post-graduate diplomas.

Koh said he felt privileged to receive the honorary degree as it allowed him to join the ranks of USM graduates.

"It is particularly meaningful to me as it was here at USM that I embarked on my career as an academician after returning from my studies abroad in 1975."

He said it was the first time that he had received a degree in full cap and gown at a formal convocation ceremony although he had earned a degree in physics, a master's degree in education and a doctorate in economics of education.

"This is because at the convocation of Princeton University in June 1970, I joined most of the graduates in refusing to wear the cap and gown and instead wore a white armband as a gesture of protest against the US invasion of Cambodia and the Vietnam war."

He again missed two other convocations when he qualified for a master's degree from the University of Chicago in 1973 as he was back in Malaysia doing research, and in 1977 for his doctorate degree as he was teaching at USM then.

Meanwhile, Abdul Aziz, 75, said he was gratified by the honour as "I thought having come so far, people would have long forgotten me".

Marina, the Prime Minister's daughter, said she was very honoured by the award and found it "a big thrill".

She said the award was not for herself but for all the people working with HIV/AIDS patients.

Marina said it showed that awareness of HIV/AIDS had increased, as five years ago it would have been unthought of for people working with HIV/AIDS patients to be recognised this way.

On hand to show their support for Marina were family members comprising her mother, her aunt Datuk Paduka Saleha Ali, her brothers Mirsan, Mukhri, Mokhzani and his wife, Mastisa Mohamad, her 10-year-old daughter Ineza and

her best friend, Vivienne Lee.

Her only regret was that her father, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, was unable to be present as he had to attend the MIC convention in Kuala Lumpur.

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