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19-year-old Petronas scholar expresses her gratitude

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SAY what you like, there are many people out there who can still say "thank you" properly. Saying "thank you" reflects upbringing and a sense of values which has to be nurtured always.

There appears to have been a lot of negative vibes in recent weeks which have led to much debate, be it at teh tarik stalls or coffeehouses and karaoke lounges. But a letter I received a few days ago shows how a grateful young student expressed her appreciation.

Going by her initials AA, the student has by now gone to pursue her studies overseas. She had difficulties in getting funds or sponsors for her studies though her parents had done everything to make sure she advanced her studies.

Her plight caught the attention of well-wishers, who rallied behind her when all else looked futile and hopeless. The 19-year-old girl eventually wrote a letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to express her thoughts on the matter.

I've allowed her letter to run in the manner in which she wrote. I thought I should share with everyone her sentiments in as genuine a way as possible:

"I'm just another Malaysian citizen, making her way through a big crowd of a very grateful nation, trying to make her own personal gratitude stand out among many others. 'What could this girl be graceful for?' you might ask.

"Firstly, I would like to apologise for this rather informal approach. I am 19 years old. I have just recently completed my two-year A-Level course in Kolej Matrikulasi Yayasan Saad, that the only thing interrupting the plan was because there was no money.

"I began filling up scholarship forms, Abah was busy mailing them and making appeals, Mama was praying hard, and my brother, once in a while, kept telling me to have faith and that things would turn out all right.

"Months passed by, and there was still no good news. 'No response from Maxis, regret from UEM, and under consideration from Petronas,' was what my dad wrote to one of the daily papers.

"But now, I am glad to announce that I am currently a Petronas scholar and this could have never happened without your help.

When Encik Yunos, the manager of the Education Sponsorship Unit of Petronas called me to deliver the good news, I was jumping with joy, and while tears of happiness were streaming down my face, I uttered, 'Alhamdulillah'.

"With this, I would like to bid my highest gratitude for what you have done. No words can describe how grateful I am to you and how this incident has indirectly inspired me to do well in my whole four years of study in Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York.

"I am enthused, proud and excited to leave for New York and return with nothing but a piece of paper, a first class bachelors degree in Electrical/Electronic Engineering. Insyah-Allah, this may be achievable.

"Four other Petronas scholars and myself will be leaving for New York, insyiah-Allah on this coming Aug 16.

After obtaining this scholarship and after attending the two-week pre-departure orientation in Permata in Bangi, I am so determined to excel in my studies and come back to Malaysia as a qualified, reputed Electrical and Electronic engineer.

"I just can't simply wait to work for Petronas and serve the country with my acquired knowledge and experience. Petronas' vision and mission is too promising and I find that I wouldn't miss the chance to be able to work with Malaysia's biggest oil company which is also one of the Fortune 500 companies.

"In others words, Datuk Seri, I will never let you down. For every lecture I attend, every book I read, every good C.G.P.A. I dream of obtaining, it's certainly for my own benefit and it's my very own way of thanking you.

"Before I wind up this letter, I would like to congratulate you on your 20th anniversary as Prime Minister of Malaysia. I wish you could still lead our beloved country for many years to come. We still need you. I thank you so much for your kind attention. Till next time, AA."

It's our hope too that AA returns to Malaysia with a string of As to her credit. She has made a promise to herself and to all her well-wishers. I'm sure her parents are going to pray hard for success.

She has put added pressure on herself. Perhaps, the pressure serves as a firm reminder to AA that her quest for excellence must be pursued relentlessly, and with a single purpose of mind.

All the best!