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Scorers-Mahathir

200 SPM TOP ACHIEVERS FETED BY PM, CABINET

PUTRAJAYA, April 4 (Bernama) -- In its own special way of saying "congratulations!", the Cabinet led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad feted 207 top achievers in last year's SPM examination over lunch at the federal administrative centre here today.

For a memorable two hours, they not only mingled with national leaders and walked along the corridors of power but also had photographs taken with and autographs signed by Dr Mahathir, his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and almost all Cabinet members.

Abdullah described his guests as the cream of the cream of the 2,000 high achievers in the 2000 SPM examination because among them they had scored between nine and 13 straight A's.

"I never imagine of being entertained by our national leaders, let alone by Dr Mahathir and Pak Lah (by which Abdullah is fondly known as)...I shall cherish this moment for the rest of my life," said one of the high achievers Raiha Hasni who scored A1 for all the nine subjects she sat for.

Raiha, who hailed from Sungai Petani and now doing her matriculation in Kuala Pilah, said today's gathering has inspired her to strive harder to be a medical specialist.

Raiha's mother Rohani Ismail, who accompanied her, said the function also allowed parents to share the joy and pride over the children's scholastic accomplishments.

Wong Yew Choe, who sat for the SPM when studying at Petaling Jaya's Catholic High School, described mingling with the prime minister, his deputy and the ministers as "an unexpected and once in a lifetime event".

"I had a great time... I never dreamt of this," said Wong who appreciated the government's desire to see the top achievers get to know each other in person and for this it had even compiled their e-mail addresses to keep in touch after this.

Accompanying his daughter Kalpana Sehgal, who scored 11 A's, Paras Ram of Ipoh said that by honouring the high achievers the government would motivate future SPM candidates to achieve similar successes.

Norfarahiyah Mustafa of Ipoh, who also scored nine A's, said she did not expect to be entertained the Cabinet the way it did just because she did well in the examination.

"All this while, I thought our success is only for us to celebrate," said the former student of MRSM Jasin who is pursuing tertiary studies at Universiti Teknologi Mara in Shah Alam.

Mona Zarita Abdul Manan, former student of Kuala Lumpur's Sekolah Menengah Seri Puteri who scored nine A's, said if the government itself recognised the achievements of the top scorers by way of hosting the luncheon, there was no reason for students at large not to emulate the high achievers.

"It is not easy to have lunch with the prime minister, the deputy prime minister and other ministers... have our picture taken with them and hear their inspiring words," she said.

However, she said it was rather unfortunate for her to have missed today's opportunity to be photographed with Dr Mahathir as the prime minister was then surrounded by other fellow high-achievers.

-- BERNAMA

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