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Abdullah-Blind

BLIND CHILDREN THRILLED BY PAK LAH'S STORYTELLING SKILLS

KUALA LUMPUR, July 30 (Bernama) -- They may be vision-impaired children but it was a meeting they were eagerly looking forward to.

Thirteen students of the Special Education School (for the visually impaired) in Jalan Batu here had a rare opportunity of listening to a story narrated by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today.

Their sense of expectancy was obvious when they greeted the announcement on Abdullah's arrival with shouts of joy, with one of them saying "ye, ye we are going to listen to stories again."

Abdullah did not let the children down, telling them the legend of "Raja Bersiong" about a Malay King who grew fangs after drinking human blood.

Abdullah, who referred to himself as "Pak Lah", was told by one of the children that they were happy because yet another top leader had come to tell them stories.

The children sat cross-legged on a stage and listened in rapt attention as Abdullah, seated on a chair facing them, read out the story from a book.

At times changing the tone of his voice to suit the character in the novel, Abdullah also tested the children's understanding of the many archaic Malay words used in the book.

They certainly make up for their physical handicap with intelligence as they showed commendable comprehension by frequently answering questions and interacting with the Deputy Prime Minister.

The event, at the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) Complex, is part of a series of storytelling sessions organised for visually impaired children by Puteri Umno and the Umno Civil Action Bureau in collaboration with the MAB.

So far, 30 leaders including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad have taken part in the sessions while 70 others have registered to do so.

After that, Abdullah, accompanied by Puteri Umno pro tem chief Azalina Othman Said and MAB acting president Prof Dr Ismail Md Salleh, toured the complex.

Abdullah also opened the MAB Cyber Cafe and Family Clinic at the complex.

Abdullah told reporters later that the facilities provided for the less fortunate had boosted their self-confidence and helped them overcome problems associated with their handicap.

"They are now more confident about life and have succeeded in the fields they ventured into. In fact, the feeling of being marginalised has lessened because they can join in the community's activities without any inferiority complex," he said.

He said institutions like the MAB should find new ways to bring better facilities to the visually handicapped so that they can lead a more meaningful life and contribute to the country like other people.

"They are not seeking sympathy; they just want to be given a chance to overcome their problems and taste success," Abdullah said.

-- BERNAMA

HS AHH YBY