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### Pomp and splendour marks IIUM opening

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The historic opening of the RM680 million International Islamic University Malaysia, Gombak campus, took place amid pomp and splendour with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad being escorted into the campus ground by a convoy of 22 motorcycles ridden by students.

Dr Mahathir who arrived with his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali was greeted on arrival at the Cultural Activity Centre (CAC) by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, several Cabinet Ministers, Menteri Besar, IIUM president Tan Sri Sanusi Junid, rector Professor Dr M. Kamal Hassan, Associate Professor Datuk Dr Jamil Osman, and chairman of the official opening ceremony committee Professor Dr Ismawi Zen.

Also present to greet Dr Mahathir was Organisation of Islamic Conference secretary-general Dr Adelouahed Belkaziz, Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World secretary-general Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri, IIUM Board of Governors, ambassadors of Muslim and non-Muslim countries and vice-chancellors.

The function started with the flag raising ceremony of 72 nations out of the 104 foreign countries representing the student population at IIUM. It was then followed by 144 uniformed students playing the band.

The Prime Minister and his wife were then ushered into the great hall of the CAC after Dr Mahathir signed the VIP Guest book where he was given a rousing welcome by more than 10,000 guests and students.

The ceremony began with speeches delivered by Kamal, Sanusi, Dr Abdulaziz, and Dr Abdelouahed.

The speeches enlightened the audience of the university's humble beginnings 18 years ago when it started with 153 students in two faculties - law and economics - at the Petaling Jaya campus.

Today there are 10,500 students in Gombak and Kuantan campuses and 5,300 students in the Matriculation Centre in Petaling Jaya.

The big rousing applause came when Dr Mahathir was called to deliver his opening speech.

The programme continued with Dr Mahathir placing an important historical document on IIUM inside a time capsule which will be opened only on April 17, 2101.

The official opening was marked with the placing of a Quran in the centre of IIUM logo amidst lighting and pyrotechnic displays.

Several companies and organisations also took the opportunity to make donations towards the IIUM endowment fund.

They were Celcom Berhad which donated RM5 million over a period of five years, Intria Berhad (RM100,000), Nadicorp Holdings Sdn Bhd (RM70,000), KFC Holdings (RM50,000), Bank Kerjasama Rakyat (M) Berhad (RM50,000), Baitulmal Malaysia (RM50,000), IIUM Alumni Association (RM30,000) and another RM130,800 by various other organisations and individuals.

Another interesting event was when the Malaysian Book of Records managing director Danny Ooi came on stage to hand a certificate to Dr Mahathir to be handed to a student representative in recognition of his debating team having won the seventh placing in the world at the World Universities Debating championship held in University of Sydney, Australia.

The IIUM team beat 204 teams around the world. On hand to receive the

certificate was one of the four debaters, Aizuddin Danian.

In conjunction with the opening, an exhibition was held at the Kuliyyah of Architecture and Environmental Design (KAED) building.

Dr Mahathir who went round the booths was greeted by soothing gamelan music and students.

There were 40 informative booths at the exhibition which represent the nine faculties at the university, student societies, as well as various business companies.

At the exhibition, Dr Mahathir launched academic publications by the IIUM Research Centre as well as the IHSAN- the IIUM Highspeed Advanced Network, which is IIUM's network infrastructure.

The public who visit the exhibition, starting today till Thursday, would be able to get information on various faculties at the booths.

The medical faculty has also set up a booth offering free medical tests such as checking blood pressure, blood group, blood cholesterol and blood glucose, to the public.

Visitors can take part in investment stimulation games at the faculty of economics and management information systems.

The Law Students Society are organising "moot court" where visitors will be able to get a feel of the action in the courts.

The foreign student population was not to be outdone, and had put up a colourful and vibrant display of culture, with booths representing the various continents of student origin.

First year economic students Rashad Mamedou, 19, Anar Arablinski, 21, and Zaur Gojayev, 20, from Azerbaijan were crowd favourites, dressed in the traditional costumes of their country.

They even demonstrated traditional dances, much to the amusement of the crowd.

At the Vietnamese booth, students were dressed in the traditional bridal clothes of the Champa Muslims as well as non-Muslims.

There was an overall air of excitement and pride as students expressed their happiness over the opening.

"We are very proud and happy. After many years of not having our own premises, it finally feels like we belong in a university of our own," said opening ceremony committee member Ainul Rasyidah Abd Rahim.