

30/08/2001

Two lucky students tell Dr Mahathir their aspirations for Malaysia

PUTRAJAYA, Wed. - It isn't often that young people get a chance to tell the Prime Minister their aspirations for Malaysia, but two students did just that today.

Johann Ghazaly, 15, and Pong Yu Ming, 16, won the opportunity to meet Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad after grabbing the top prizes in a National Day essay and letter-writing contest.

The contest was organised by the New Straits Times and Coca-Cola Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir received them with warm smiles as they handed over their essays to him at the prize-giving ceremony at Putrajaya's Perdana Square.

The Prime Minister also presented them with a trophy each.

Both Johann, a Form Three student at the St John's Institution and Pong, a Form Four student from SMK Taman Desa, went home with RM5,000 each.

In his letter to the Prime Minister, Johann wrote about how violence had caused much suffering in the world and the need for the young to be exposed to humanitarian ideas.

"Why? So we will know that violent action such as reformasi (violence in the streets) is not the best solution ... it is an act that shows fear and hatred," he wrote.

He said young people searching for an identity were often tempted to try out extreme behaviour.

Pong wrote an essay on how he hoped to build Malaysia into a people's nation which would be respected, educated and free from social ills.

He had dreams for an economically-sound country which had mastered technology but also a country which cherished its natural environment.

"We mustn't forget that our children don't inherit the earth from us, but it is we who borrow it from them," he said.

He also wanted a caring and loving society.

The contest, which ran from Aug 1 to Aug 21, attracted 300 entries from students for its two categories - lower secondary (Forms One to Three) and upper secondary (Forms Four and Five).

The students were asked to write essays or letters expressing their hopes for Malaysia, and were judged on their ideas, logic, practicality and language.

Present at the prize-giving ceremony were New Straits Times Sdn Bhd group editor Datuk Ahmad A. Talib and Coca-Cola country manager Reiner Becker.

(END)