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PM given warm welcome by students in Johor

PASIR GUDANG, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad took a rare break from politics today on his one-day working visit to Johor, focusing instead on patriotism and the interest of students.

He was given a rapturous welcome at the closing ceremony of the Secondary School Student Leaders Patriotic Assembly here.

Dr Mahathir was greeted by over 7,000 secondary school students who cheered him as he made his way into the Pasir Gudang Municipal Stadium.

The national-level assembly was attended by 1,040 student leaders. They visited historical sites in the State and attended motivational talks and programmes on patriotism during the five-day leadership workshop.

Other students from Johor Baru district were specially ferried to the stadium for the closing ceremony, which was also attended by Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohammad and Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman.

The event was marked by a brass band and traditional dance performances as well as a musical sketch on the country's independence struggle initiated by Datuk Onn Jaafar - the founder of Umno.

It was also marked by a performance of the traditional dance, zapin, by 1,038 students.

At UTM, more than 5,000 undergraduates waved miniature Jalur Gemilang (national flags) and cheered as Dr Mahathir arrived.

The students, who packed Dewan Sultan Iskandar, listened attentively to his 45-minute speech, which was peppered with advice on the need for them to improve themselves and resist attempts by irresponsible quarters to influence them negatively.

The tail-end of the function saw Dr Mahathir presenting UTM vice-chancellor Datuk Dr Mohd Zulkifli Mohd Ghazali with a plaque signifying the granting of the university's Multimedia Super Corridor status.

It was again a struggle for the Prime Minister to leave the hall as the students scrambled to shake his hand.

Spontaneous shouts of "Merdeka!" and "Long live Malaysia!" were heard from the students as Dr Mahathir made his way to his car.