

26/01/2002

Dr M receives surprise gift from Afghan nationals

MALACCA, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad received a pleasant surprise when two Afghan nationals presented him with a wall carpet and a Quranic verse wall-hanging, but not before a "scare".

The Prime Minister, who was on a one-day visit to the State, was having lunch after performing Friday prayers at the Bukit Katil mosque when the men approached officials and made known their intention to hand over the "gifts".

But the bulky and neatly wrapped packages created some suspicion, prompting the police to call in the bomb squad.

A four-men squad arrived and immediately opened the packages, conducting a thorough check of the contents. The men, who declined to reveal their names, were also searched.

While the packages were being screened at the mosque's entrance, the crowd was kept at bay.

Only after the all-clear sign was given that the Afghans were allowed to present the gifts to Dr Mahathir, who was unaware of the safety precaution taken.

Meanwhile, 91 special students were touched when the Prime Minister's wife, Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali spent time to meet and shake hands with all of them during her official visit to the school today.

Dr Siti Hasmah, who was accompanying Dr Mahathir on his one-day official visit to Malacca, spent nearly one-and-a-half hours at Sekolah Kebangsaan Pendidikan Khas, Semabok and were treated by pantomime show and traditional dances.

Present was Datin Seri Asmah Abdul Rahman, wife of Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam.

Duzaimah Kamaruddin, a teacher who trained the students to perform the pantomime, said she took eight days to prepare her students for the show.

"I'am happy with the performance put up by the students as they are truly talented," he said.

Earlier, Dr Siti Hasmah received a cheque for RM85,205.36 for the Afghanistan refugee relief fund.

The amount was contributed by non-governmental organisations, government departments, factories, universities with campuses here and Bistari, the association of assemblymen's wives.

The cheque was presented by Asmah, who is Bistari chairman.

(END)