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PM walks down memory lane with the `old' boys

PUTRAJAYA, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is president of the Sultan Abdul Hamid Old Collegians Association, hosted a gathering of old boys at Seri Perdana today.

Together with Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Dr Mahathir mingled with his guests for about three hours and posed for photographs.

About 200 former students, their spouses and children were present.

In a light-hearted speech, Dr Mahathir said he was very happy to see his old friends, some of whom he could not recognise at first.

"Some of the younger members told me that when they were babies, they were brought to my clinic," he said.

Dr Mahathir said there were now quite a few Sahoca members in the government service and in the private sector.

"I am, in a way, disappointed. I feel quite lonely sometimes because there are not many from Kedah who join the Federal Government or companies based in Kuala Lumpur.

"Kedah people think Kedah is the greatest place in the world. More should come here to work with the Government and to keep me company," he quipped.

Dr Mahathir said he would also like to see more Kedahans enter politics.

"Of course, when I say go into politics I don't mean join Pas. Join Umno," he said to laughter from attendees.

He said he wondered what the "boys" were doing as only "girls" were getting the top jobs in the Government.

"I am very happy to see more women take an interest in studying and being appointed to high posts in the Government. They are very serious about their work, very efficient, and I'm beginning to rely more on them than on men."

Thanking the Sahoca members for visiting him, he said their presence was nostalgic and brought back a lot of memories.

"We know we cannot go back in time and can only go forward. The future holds many challenges for all of us and whether we make this country a great country depends on our children and their children. So tell your children they have a responsibility for this country."

He also touched on his recent trip to Antarctica, which he said was extremely cold despite it being summer.

"Despite wearing six layers of clothing, I had to sit close to my wife for warmth. The three Ministers who were with me also brought their wives.

"It is important to bring along wives as there is no chance of getting married in Antarctica as the only inhabitants are penguins, seals and whales."

Dr Mahathir quipped that he wanted "to be a hero" and was up and about to show leadership by example. There were times when the sea was stormy with very high waves, and one then understood what was meant by instability.

"I managed to survive a very interesting journey," he said, adding that he also travelled in a Russian helicopter that landed on icebergs, and rode on a zodiac boat.

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