

Swiss Garden throws farewell party for Yasmine, father

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Nine-year-old Iraqi bomb blast victim Yasmine Wa'adi and her father Wa'adi Makhtoor were given a farewell party before their departure for home tomorrow.

The event was hosted by Swiss Garden Hotel Kuala Lumpur. General manager Raymond Yeoh said Yasmine would be missed by everyone at the hotel.

"When she arrived here on June 6, communication was a barrier. So it's quite amazing to listen to her speaking in English and Malay now.

"After four months, she will be sorely missed by all," said Yeoh.

Yasmine was brought to Malaysia on May 5 under the initiative of the Joint Media Team Malaysia. The JMTM was led by Datuk Ahmad A. Talib, who is group editor of the *New Straits Times*.

Ahmad, who was present at the farewell party, said he hoped Yasmine would be able to live a normal life.

"I hope that she can lead a normal life just like her peers back in Baghdad.

"There were probably thousands of sufferers like her in Iraq, but she is the symbol of what we can do in helping others," he said.

On Aug 26, Yasmine, who lost both of her legs, received prostheses and underwent physiotherapy at the Chinese Maternity Hospital.

Wa'adi Makhtoor, through an interpreter, said he is happy to see her daughter able to walk again.

"It was not easy for everyone, especially those who are close to see her suffer because of the war. It was quite disheartening for me to see her using a wheelchair.

"How I wish to have you all in Baghdad as my guests," said the visibly touched man.

Their home in Al-Saab, 20km southeast from Baghdad, was bombed on April 9 by the US-led forces.

In the attack, Yasmine's brother Rahim died, while her two other siblings Ibrahim and Jaafar were injured.

During her stay, Yasmine even received a special visit from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Datuk Seri Siti Hasmah Ali on Wednesday.

Yasmine and her father will fly to Amman from Kuala Lumpur International Airport at 11.15pm tomorrow.

There, they will be greeted by three Malaysian journalists — Shamsul Akmar, Azman Abdul Hamid and Kamaruddin Ahmad. Together, they will travel overland to Baghdad.

Will Yasmine remember us when she return to her homeland tomorrow?

With a smile, she simply answered: "Yes, thank you Malaysia!"