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Farewell dinner for Dr Siti Hasmah

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Saying goodbye is never easy, especially to a woman much respected for her contributions to the country, and the farewell dinner by the Association of Wives of Civil Servants and Women Civil Servants (Puspanita) for its former patron Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali was no less poignant.

Accompanied by her husband, former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Dr Siti Hasmah was greeted by more than 500 Puspanita members who had gathered at the Putra World Trade Centre's Merdeka Hall.

Also present were MP for Pekan Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, his wife Datuk Rosmah Mansor, MP for Lembah Pantai Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman and Puspanita head Puan Sri Suslita Abdul Majid.

Dr Siti Hasmah said she was proud to have had the chance to work with the many talented women of Puspanita.

"Puspanita was established with the purpose of creating a vehicle for wives of civil servants and women civil servants to contribute to society through various activities and projects," she said.

Dr Siti Hasmah hoped Puspanita would reach greater heights under Datin Seri Endon Mahmood.

"The association is actually the brain child of my husband. He was inspired after a family trip to Indonesia in 1975 where we were warmly greeted by the womenfolk who were especially skilled in cultural dances and greeting customs.

"These women belonged to a group called Dharmawanita which was established to enhance their role in society. Their patron was the wife of the Indonesian president and thousands of women from all over the country were members of the group," she said.

On returning to Malaysia, Dr Mahathir suggested the formation of a similar group here and the result was the establishment of Puspanita in 1983.

The evening was filled with colourful performances by Puspanita members, but the highlight of the night yesterday was the duet by the former first couple. The crowd cheered appreciatively when they sang a Malay classic, Pungguk Rindukan Bulan.