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Students' expressions of love for Dr M

Brenda Lim; Ranjeetha Pakiam; Sharifah Salwa Sayed Hassan; Nadim KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Schools and educational institutions nationwide today came out in full force to express their heartfelt appreciation to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Students, teachers and school staff rose to the Education Ministry's call to commemorate Dr Mahathir's retirement tomorrow as a sign of respect for his exemplary leadership of the country.

All primary and secondary schools nationwide held simultaneous assemblies at 9am, where special messages from Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad and Education director-general Datuk Abdul Rafie Mahat paying tribute to Dr Mahathir were read.

In Kepala Batas, all 1,328 students of Sekolah Menengah Datuk Haji Ahmad Badawi signed a large "Thank You" banner for Dr Mahathir to show their love for the Prime Minister.

The students were joined by their principal, Zainab Saiman, teachers and other school staff.

Before signing the banner, which was later hung in the school canteen, they also sang a few patriotic songs.

Meanwhile, on Penang island, about 2,500 students and teachers from two primary and three secondary schools participated in a special joint assembly to express their appreciation to Dr Mahathir.

The gathering, held at St. Xaviers' Institution in Lebu Farquhar, included students from SMK Hutchings, SMK Convent Light Street, SK Hutchings, SK Convent Light Street and the host school.

Also taking part were 50 pre-schoolers from Tadika Convent Light Street.

Together with their older peers, the pre-schoolers took turns to recite special poems dedicated to Dr Mahathir. Present was Sungai Pinang State Assemblyman Looi Swee Cheang.

In Ipoh, creative juices flowed as students and teachers from schools and colleges held special assemblies to express gratitude to the Prime Minister.

At the Methodist Girls' Primary School here, palm-prints and signatures from over 1,000 staff and students decorated a 40m banner, which was later displayed on the school fence.

The pupils expressed their feelings on the banner with messages like "You will always be in our hearts" and "Your deeds will always be remembered and cherished".

Some students also made cards for the Prime Minister.

In SK Jelapang, students filled banners and cards with their own messages to Dr Mahathir.

At Politeknik Ungku Omar, some 1,000 students signed banners, recited poetry and set up a photo exhibition of the "100 faces of Dr Mahathir".

"We wanted to thank the Prime Minister for leading the country and developing Malaysia for the future generation," PUO director Lt Kol Mohammed Zakaria Mohd Noor said.

In Kuala Terengganu, a special assembly to commemorate Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's last day in office was particularly memorable for the students of SK Renggas Bekah who marked the day by signing a huge banner.

The colourful banner was signed by the 830 students and 45 teachers.

Headmaster A. Manan A. Rahman said the banner was a brainchild of discipline teacher Syed Fadzil Syed Jonid and special education teacher

Mohd Rafe Ngah, who wanted to do something more than just read out the prepared speeches to commemorate the day.

In Johor Baru, over 800 students of the SMK Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah gathered at the Dewan Putri Tun Maimunah to pay tribute to Dr Mahathir.

SMK Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah senior assistant of student affairs, Ang Wah Choo, thanked Dr Mahathir for the government's contributions towards the building of the RM1.2 million Dewan Putri Tun Maimunah.

Ang said the school's former principal, Kamisah Mohd Hassan, had approached Dr Mahathir for help during one of his visits to Pontian in 1998.

"A week later, the government agreed to chip in RM546,000 for the building of the school hall and for this we are grateful to Dr Mahathir," she said.

Student Vanessa Er, a Form Five student of the school, described Dr Mahathir as irreplaceable but added that she also had confidence in his successor, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Er's classmates, Renuka Nair and Nadiah Hasnun, both 17, shared her sentiment.

Over at the SM (P) Sultan Ibrahim, 800 over students also gathered at the school field to talk about their love and admiration for Dr Mahathir.

With a banner which read: "We Love You", the girls were also heard shouting "We need you!"

In Kuching, some 1,300 students of SK Encik Buyong here today dedicated their daily morning assembly to Dr Mahathir.