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Unbound by paralysis

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Engineering student defeats the odds to receive his scroll

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TRONOH: Of all the students who received their scrolls from Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP) chancellor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Mohd Abdul Hafiz Abu Tahir was the happiest.

The chemical engineering student had reason to be proud despite being paralysed from the neck down.

During the final semester of his studies in May last year, Abdul Hafiz went on an outing at Tanjung Balau in Johor, where he decided to go diving.

He did all right the first three times.

"On the fourth dive, I made a wrong move somehow and landed on the water wrongly. I was conscious, but I couldn't move," he recalled.

"When my friends saw that I was in trouble, they pulled me out from the sea so I would not drown. I then realised that I was paralysed," he said at the 12th convocation of the university in Seri Iskandar near here yesterday.

I am determined to improve my condition. I want to stand up and sit down on my own.

— MOHD ABDUL HAFIZ ABU TAHIR

The 24-year-old, who is from Kota Tinggi, had to travel in an ambulance for four days to accept his scroll. He still needs to be monitored by medical staff if he needs to go on long trips.

Abdul Hafiz said he was hampered by his lack of mobility, and had to be helped out of bed daily.

"The final subject for the semester required me to perform experiments," he said. "Following discussions with my lecturers, the university allowed me to drop the subject as I would be unable to carry them out.

"But, I decided to persevere, and managed to complete my course," he added.

Abdul Hafiz, the fifth child in a family of six children, said he was undergoing physiotherapy at the Sultan Ismail Hospital in Johor Baru.

"I am determined to improve my condition," he said.

"I want to stand up and sit down on my own."

Later, Dr Mahathir told reporters that it



Perseverance pays off: Dr Mahathir presenting Abdul Hafiz his scroll during UTP's convocation ceremony. — Bernama

was normal for companies to give donations to political parties, both the ruling and Opposition ones, during a general election.

He said such an act was not new. "It's even done in the United States," he said.

Timber trader Michael Chia was detained in Hong Kong in 2008 with RM40mil on him, apparently meant for Sabah Chief Minister

Datuk Seri Musa Aman.

On Oct 11, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz said the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission had categorised the money given to Sabah Umno as a donation.

And, Musa and Chia have been cleared of corruption allegations.