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Former PM gets surprise birthday celebration

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MASTER OF CEREMONY: College wishes him 'Happy Birthday' after convocation

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FORMER prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was given a surprise birthday celebration during a college's convocation in Bukit Tinggi here yesterday.

Abdullah, fondly known as Pak Lah, was taken by surprise when the master of ceremony wished him a "Happy Birthday" after he finished presenting diplomas and certificates to 568 WIT College graduates at Premiere Hotel here.

He cut a birthday cake, which was served to the audience along with *pulut kuning*.

WIT College public relations officer Mohd Hosni Jahari said the celebration was planned by college chairman Tan Sri Zainal Rampak and its management officers.

"(Tan Sri) Zainal and I found out the date of this ceremony falls on the same date as (Tun) Abdullah's birthday when we delivered our official invitation to him in July.

"This gave us the idea to celebrate the former prime minister's birthday during the event."

The event saw 85 graduates receiving their diplomas, while 483 received skills certificates in various fields.

WIT College offers skill-based courses, including certificates in



Former prime minister **Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi** (second from right) cutting a birthday cake at **WIT College's convocation** in Bukit Tinggi, Klang, yesterday. With him are college chairman **Tan Sri Zainal Rampak** (third from left) and management officers.

Electrical Installation and Repair, Senior Automation Technician, Computer Operation System, Beautician course and Metal Arch Welding.

In **Kepala Batas**, locals wished Abdullah, who was their former member of parliament, a happy birthday.

They thanked him for developing Kepala Batas, and turning the former oil palm and rubber estate into a modern township.

Civil servant Azian Azizan, 28, said she and her family had moved from Perak to Kepala Batas a few years as there were many job opportunities, universities and colleges in the town

"Kepala Batas had developed from

a small rural town into a bustling and modern town with increased population, factories, universities, schools and housing.

"The development is all thanks to our former parliamentarian and prime minister," she said when met at Mydin in Bertam.

Restaurant owner Mohd Alif Abu Bakar, 36, said Pak Lah had transformed his birthplace and the lives of its residents.

"Kepala Batas went through rapid development under a rural modernisation approach to allow the locals to be part of the development.

"After he became the prime minister in 2003, Pak Lah brought in new factories, hypermarkets and

housing schemes, which benefited residents, as there were more job opportunities," he said, adding that they even had a mosque, which was the envy of other constituencies.

The township is now home to Universiti Sains Malaysia's Advanced Medical Research and Dentistry Institute, a Mara Junior Science College, Kepala Batas Community College, Kepala Batas Industrial Training Institute, Penang Matriculation College, Malaysian Productivity Corporation, Perda Agro-based and Industrial Complex and Mardi Research Institute.

Several development projects have been carried out in the 1,600ha Bertam Valley.