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PM CONGRATULATES YOUNG SCIENTIST

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Astronomy student recognised for famous blackhole discovery

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YOUNG scientist, Nur Adlyka Annuar, 27, who led a team of international scientists to discover a supermassive blackhole in a nearby galaxy early this year, was among many Malaysian professionals at a session organised by TalentCorp yesterday.

She was there not in search of a job, but to receive a congratulatory letter from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who was very proud of her achievement, not just as a Malaysian, but also as a Malaysian woman.

The letter was handed over by TalentCorp chief executive officer Shareen Shariza Abdul Ghani.

The astronomy student from Durham University had travelled with her husband, Amirul Adli Abdul Aziz, a PhD student from Sheffield University to receive the letter.

"The prime minister had congratulated me on the success and he said he was excited with my achievement, not only as a Malaysian, but also as a Malaysian woman," said Nur Adlyka, who hails from Johor.

Life has not been quiet for the newly-married student, after the story of her success as a lead researcher of the international group working with Nasa's new telescope NuStar to detect the blackhole, broke early this year.

"I have been receiving lots of congratulatory notes from people and also jobs from universities as well as invitation to go back and give lectures and talks to inspire young Malaysians," added Nur

Adlyka, who said that her interest in astronomy was ignited after watching *Armageddon* and *Apollo 13* when she was 13.

Against her parents' wishes, she pursued the interest and was very focused. Her determination paid off as she received worldwide recognition at such a young age.

"Discovery of the supermassive blackhole in a nearby galaxy, which is about 38 million light years away from us, helps us to understand the effects of the blackholes in the galaxy that they populate," she added.

The supermassive blackholes are hidden behind gas and thick dust and they actively "eat" objects around them.

Nur Adlyka, whose parents were retired teachers, hoped to go home after completing her studies soon.

One person in the hall could not contain his pride. Amirul Adli, her husband, was smiling from ear to ear when Nur Adlyka received the letter.

"She worked really hard and she has achieved a lot. I am so proud of her," he said, admitting that he was a "weekend husband" during the time Nur Adlyka was doing her research in Durham while he was in Sheffield.

"It was tough, but we managed," quipped Nur Adlyka, adding that their long-distance marriage would continue when she leaves Amirul Adli to finish his PhD in Biochemistry for another year.

Shareen, who delivered the letter, said the prime minister, who was on the board of TalentCorp, had always been interested and concerned about the developments of young talents abroad.

"Through our networking, we heard about Nur Adlyka and without hesitation, the prime minister said we must give her this letter of recognition," said Shareen.

She added that Nur Adlyka was also keen to contribute her ideas and opinions on the TN50 programme in a way that would benefit the future generation.