

Education community pays tribute to Dr M

S 31/10/2003 - 12 PRECISE

BY GAVIN GOMEZ

KUALA LUMPUR: Schools, colleges and universities nationwide held a simultaneous special morning assembly yesterday to remember Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his immense contributions to the development of Education in Malaysia.

Students, teachers, school staff and lecturers gathered in halls and school fields across the country at 9am for the special tribute to mark the retirement of one of the world's longest-serving elected leader. In many schools and campuses, students held banners and placards in praise of his leadership over the country for 22 years.

The assembly was especially meaningful for the students of SK Seberang Perak Baru (formerly Sekolah Lelaki Seberang Perak) and Kolej Sultan Abdul Hamid (KSAH) because it was in these two schools that Dr Mahathir, who is also a former Education Minister, had his primary and secondary education.

At KSAH, prefect Khairul Azhar Abdul Jalil read out the poem *Erti Kemerdekaan* (The Meaning of Independence) which was written by Dr Mahathir followed by a recital of a poem titled *Dulu, Kini dan Selamanya* (The Past, Present and Forever) by Lower Six student Suhanza Ahmad.

Principal Morazuki Hashim said KSAH was honoured to have produced Dr Mahathir whom he described as a top world class leader who had put Malaysia on the world map.

At the Politeknik Ungku Omar In Ipoh, students, lecturers and staff bid farewell to Dr Mahathir by lining up along Jalan Raja Musa Mahadi holding a 255m-long banner with messages thanking him.

Motorists passing by the road sounded their horns as a show of support.

Messages by Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad and Education Ministry director-general Datuk Abdul Rafie Mahat as well as open letters from students were read out at the special assembly, drawing tears among many of the young audience.

Musa said the decision to do away with the quota system and to teach Mathematics and Science in English were among the watershed events that changed the face of Malaysian education under Dr Mahathir's leadership.

"When Dr Mahathir became Education Minister in 1974, a Cabinet committee report called the Mahathir Report proposed an education system to create a generation that is disciplined, patriotic and with a Malaysian identity.



SHOW OF APPRECIATION: Students from six schools congregating at a special assembly at SMK St Xaviers in Penang to pay tribute to Prime Minister Dr Mahathir on the eve of his retirement yesterday.

"The most important result of that was the introduction of the new school curriculum for primary and secondary schools - KBSR and KBSM," Musa said in his address.

He added that Dr Mahathir was a farsighted leader whose "Look East Policy" saw the education of thousands of Malaysians in Japan and South Korea.

"He was also confident that to master all areas of knowledge, it was essential to learn English as it was an international language."

On the introduction of merit-based

entry into public universities from last year, Musa said he was proud that many students were able to overcome the "hurdle of meritocracy".

Abdul Rafie said the education community was truly indebted to Dr Mahathir for establishing the country's education system and increasing access and equity to education.

"Dr Mahathir has always stressed the integral role of teachers in determining the nation's success and in nurturing students who are balanced in all aspects.