

Aussie family gets to share Dr M's birthday joy

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FOR THE ALBUM: Dr Mahathir and Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali posing with (from left) Wong, Tengku Ezan Ley, Nicole, Tengku Mahaleel, Travis, Kay, Peter and Kimberley.

PUTRAJAYA: An Australian family, on holiday in Malaysia, was pleasantly surprised when they were taken to meet Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad at his office in Putrajaya and to extend birthday greetings to the former prime minister, who celebrated his 79th birthday on Saturday.

Peter and Kay Nelson, their daughters, Nicole and Kimberley and their friend, Travis Hawke, from Newcastle, are in Malaysia as guests of Tengku Tan Sri Mahaleel Tengku Ariff, CEO of Proton Holdings Bhd.

Tengku Mahaleel's second son, Tengku Ezan Ley is a friend of Nicole and Travis. All three are studying at the University of Newcastle.

The Star group chief editor Datuk Wong Sulong accompanied the Nelsons and Mahaleel to meet Mahathir.

Peter, an electrical engineer with Oceanic Coal Australia Ltd, said: "We are over the moon to have been able to meet Dr Mahathir and wish him 'Happy Birthday.' We have heard so much about him and it's a rare privilege to meet the great man himself."

This is the first time the Nelsons have visited Malaysia and they are staggered by its economic development, and its modernisation.

"Our visit completely changed our view of Malaysia as an Islamic country," said Kay.