

The Visit to Peru

- A Presidential Touch

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It was to our great surprise that we were to be welcomed in style and honour at the Lima International Airport, PERU, inspite of the absence of His Excellency the Governor of Penang, our UPM Chancellor and his entourage, who were supposed to lead the delegation. His Excellency had responded dutifully to the order of the Prime Minister, who wanted all state governments to be in keeping with his call on spending cut. This first trip of its kind would have been cancelled, had it not been for the intervention by the Deputy Prime Minister and the Education Minister, who took into consideration the appeal made by the Ambassador of Peru to Malaysia and our Ambassador to Peru. Both ambassadors had carefully prepared the itinerary, and made the necessary contacts and arrangements. The President personally undertook responsibility by making several calls to UPM to get confirmation. Many people, including the public were puzzled by the special invitation made exclusive by a President of a country only to UPM staff and students.

How did it all happen?

It all started with a double single and simple word utterance, 'sing, sing,' that came spontaneously out of the mouth of our Vice Chancellor, Professor Dato' Dr. Syed Jalaludin Bin Syed Salim. This straight forward decision of his generated a new momentum towards a cordial social interaction between the President of Peru and UPM.

On 22 November 1996, UPM conferred an Honourary Degree of Doctor of Philosophy to President Alberto Fujimori. It was then decided that the National Anthem of Peru be played on tape. But, Dato' on his own quick sensitivity and good judgement instructed the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Prof.

Dr. Abdul Rahim Md. Sail, who was entrusted the job of organizing the Peru trip, to get a choir to sing the song live. It was in Spanish. Overwhelmed by the choir and touched by our sensitivity, and also perhaps in gratitude of the honourable reward given, he extended a plain invitation in his own simple and informal way, repeatedly since. This was confirmed by the Ambassador of Peru to Malaysia who gave a 'face-saving' dinner (for helping him to make the trip a reality) to members of the trip, which consisted of 8 academics (four Professors including 2 Deputy Vice Chancellors (SA & A), an Associate Professor, three lecturers, 2 officers and 17 students, plus three accompanying wives, on

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