

THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF SUNWAY COLLEGE – IN THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

On the 18th April, Mrs Sharman summoned the newspaper committee into the working room. She had a mammoth job for all of us. The next day was the big day we were all waiting for. Yup, it was the day of the official opening of our beloved new campus.

She explained to all of us that the official opening would be a very important day. Dignitaries from all over the world would be there, not to mention newspaper and television media as well as reporters from Sunway College's 'Footprints' and over 5,000 guests. So, not wanting to be left out of all the festivities, the Canadian Programme Newspaper Team was determined to be right there with the professionals covering this historic event.

Not to tire us too much, Mrs Sharman divided the mammoth task into several parts: Jessica Shamini and Roslin were assigned to cover the dignitaries, Keith would handle the opening ceremony, and Amanda would cover the Waterpark.

On the morning of the opening, sheer excitement had us early to the gate. We reached the entrance long before the Prime Minister was due to arrive. A long trail of students flanked both sides of the entrance. There were smiles on everyone's faces. Either they were too excited to be seeing the PM close up, or the mere fun of just hanging around with friends. It is 9.15 now, the crowd are showing slight signs of discomfort, and Mr Mayer was quoted to say 'I'm hot! Uuuuuugh!' Mr Patterson, on the other hand, was all out for it, he just could not wait to see the Prime Minister. A line of super-sized cars zoomed past us carrying other invited VIPs, like our dear Chairman of Sunway College, Dato' Musa Hitam, our transport minister, Dato' Dr Ling Liong Sik, and the Menteri Besar of Selangor, Tan Sri Dato' Muhammad Taib.



VIPs on main stage standing at attention to the National Anthem.



Andrea Lypchuck leading her choir group in the Sejahtera Malaysia.

The PM would arrive any time now; we could see the excitement written on everyone's face. To show true Sunway hospitality and appreciation, we even waved frantically at the patrolmen (which managed to wipe the seriousness off their faces). Some even waved back at us. And when we spotted the classic black limousine approaching, the students rushed towards the car. We cheered and waved like we had never done before. The PM smiled from ear to ear seeing our joy and waved back too, though not as frantically as we were. After all, we might be big in size but then we are still kids at heart.

The Prime Minister was greeted by Dato' Jeffrey Cheah and other staffs and officials of the college. The beautiful ladies attired in colourful 'baju kurungs' proudly showed off their 'bungga manggas' while 'kom-pang' was played for the Malaysian touch. As the Prime Minister stepped onto the stage, the master-of-ceremonies requested everyone to stand for the playing of the national anthem by the army band accompanied by the Sunway College choir. Then the master-of-ceremonies welcomed the almost endless list of guests, and subsequently called upon the Chief Imam of Masjid Jamek to read the 'doa selamat' .

Then the founder of SungeiWay Group of companies and Sunway College, Dato' Jeffrey Cheah gave his speech. He was understandably a little nervous at the beginning. In his speech, he emphasized that Sunway College is to serve the needs of the nation. He talked about the background of Sunway College and the new RM120 million campus. He announced that in the memory of Sunway College's previous chairman, the college library was being named after Allahyarham Tun Hussein Onn. At the end of his speech, he recited a delightful chinese poem, in English, that was really appreciated by all.

"Take my people and leave my College,
And grass will soon grow on the campus.
Take my College and leave my people,
And soon there will be a new College."

YAB Dato' Musa Hitam, Sunway College chairman since 1991 praised Dato' Jeffrey Cheah on the time, energy and money that he had invested in bringing the college to its current position. He then invited the Prime Minister to give his speech and to officially open the new Sunway College campus.



Dato' Lokman demonstrating the language computer to Dato Mahathir.



Our girls busy at the reception counter.

The Prime Minister, in his speech, praised the college for offering affordable means of obtaining higher education through its numerous twinning programmes. He reminded us all that in the process of learning, good ethics and moral values should be integrated into the minds as well. This, he said, would ensure sustainable development and growth in a multi-racial society. The PM then officially opened the Sunway College campus. It was no simple event of cutting a red ribbon, mind you. The PM first unveiled a plaque commemorating this historic occasion by fitting a 'book' with the Sunway College logo into a stand. This led the bookcase built onto a temporary wall to push itself apart to reveal the plaque and the Sunway College logo respectively, accompanied by 'Star Wars' sound track. The nearby guests gapped at the sight. It was truly remarkable. The college choir, led by Ms Andrea Lypchuck our very own Canadian teacher, sang 'Sejahtera Malaysia', to end the official ceremony.

Dato' Jeffrey Cheah then led the dignitaries into the campus. While they adjourned for a tour around the college, the public and the students were treated to some refreshments at the lobby. The dignitaries had their meal in the library which was beautifully decorated for the occasion. While the dignitaries were having their tour, we rushed to the hostel to wait for them as that was their next stop. Apartment C204, occupied by one of the CMP students (Veevianie Masabal), was chosen as a model apartment to be viewed by the visitors. The waiting process was a torture. We baked in the burning sun waiting for them, never once finding shade for we did not want to miss the PM when he comes. We waited and waited and suddenly someone screamed that the dignitaries are coming in through the other side. Uurgh ! What a waste, all this time waiting at the wrong side.

We rushed, but by then there was already a big crowd there. PM's bodyguards, all those huge guys in black suits, were trying to control the crowd. A red fancy carriage brought the VIPs to the hostel. Once the PM got down there was no stopping us, we lurched forward enveloping him for autographs. The bodyguards gave up hope of controlling us. The PM obliged us as much as he could with his signatures and, when one of us went near to get his signature, he was heard saying, 'You all make me feel like a superstar.' And the crowd chanted 'Yes, You are.' Most of the VIPs and bodyguards were amused to see the college reporters, all those students with blank and frightened looks. Dato' Musa Hitam remarked that we are trying to outwit the TV3 reporters as he saw us pushing and struggling our way through. We managed to get ourselves into the hostel with the VIPs. Either we were too slick for the bodyguards or, plainly put, we looked too pathetic to them and they had to let us, the upcoming reporters in.

Once inside, the two of us panicked. We were the only two who definitely looked out of place and totally ignored among all the black suits and the VIPs. Well, at least our Prime Minister noticed us and where we were from. The shock left us speechless and it took us awhile to answer him. Ouch!, What an embarrassment! Well, talking to a Prime Minister is not an everyday event for us. Guess the excitement really left us in a daze. The PM and his party had a quick tour of the apartment before heading back. We asked one of way. Well, we did. As the PM was walking out to the waiting carriage, he stopped to shake hands with one of us who managed to hold on to his hand a little longer and asked him what he thought of Sunway College and the students and he said, "You are all very lucky." When we asked him why, he said " Because you are not in Bosnia." Everyone laughed at this. She had to let go of his hand for all the big bullies were beginning to give stern looks. Before the VIPs got into the carriage, we managed to wink at the bodyguard (much to his amusement). He never thought amateur reporter like us could do it. The carriage left and some of the delegates shouted back, ' Beautiful college and beautiful people.' Gee, thanks, nice to know all the efforts put in has paid off.

Amanda and Michele joined the party at the Water Themepark to cover its opening. As the carriage left for the lagoon, we rushed on foot to the lagoon under the hot noon-day sun. Being girls, we managed to steal a few minutes to freshen up and pack our sun block with us.

Noisy, packed and boisterous. Laughter, music and joy filled the air of the Water Themepark for the opening ceremony of Sunway Lagoon. People of all ages could be seen on the slides and in the pools having a tremendously superb time. Among these people were the familiar faces of our very own sunway students taking full advantage of the free entrance and use of the park (getting away for a day from the stress of books). Wide smiles spread across the faces of those we saw. The weather was also promising, showing signs of the nice, sunny, bright, hot afternoon. Just the perfect time to spend the afternoon soaking in the cool and refreshing water.



Dato Mahathir returning the "pearl" to the rightful oyster.

Invited guests and VIPs watching anxiously at the water show on deck



Ms Jamie Crow showing off her acrobatic ballet on jet ski.



Those who did not participate in the splash-splashing of water were found lazily strolling around the park, enjoying and admiring the magnificent view. Others were queuing up time and again for the 'free food' and chilling cold drinks served at the food counter.

The visitors at Sunway Lagoon were also thrilled that afternoon by an interesting performance of high diving and jet skiing by a group of world class professional athletes. This 30-minutes show kicked off with an exciting composition of graceful water ballet performed by Jamie Crow. Later, the diving events were performed from about 75 feet above water, jumping from the suspension bridge, both divers put on an acrobatic display. Another graceful performance jet skiing water ballet was performed by the talented couple, Jamie and Laurie Crow. Towards the end, more intense high diving was put on. The human torch dive really caught our attention. Tom Kaser wrapped only in a cotton suit and cape dipped in a gasoline, was turned into a blazing fire ball 56 feet from the water. The audience were captivated by the performance, mesmerized at the courage of Tom Kaser. A dive by Alex Belitnikov, the world record quadruple somersault with a half twist, closed the show.

Overall, many enjoyed their 'escapade' at Sunway Lagoon. Many spend an average of 5 to 6 hours in the pool having a great time. The next day, sun burns, muscles and body aches awaited us. But heck it was all worth it and we enjoyed every bit.

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