

PM: Nation-building open to everyone

NST 3 MAY 1993

KOTA KINABALU, Sun. — The Barisan Nasional Government encourages the participation of all communities in determining the nation's direction, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Regardless of their cultural and religious beliefs, the BN Government allowed everyone to play their role in helping the country to grow and prosper, he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said that fostering unity was also the basis of the national coalition's struggle.

"In Malaysia, we do not insist others follow our ways as we do not like oth-

ers to do the same to us. This is why our country does not face problems of disunity, unlike some countries," he said.

Speaking when launching the Pesta Kaamatan (harvest festival) here today, Dr Mahathir said it was the tradition in Malaysia for its people to visit one another during festivals.

He said Malaysia's position had enabled its plural society to lead a harmonious life based on a power-sharing system introduced by the Perikatan and sustained by the BN.

He said the Federal Government treated everyone equally but the people in Sabah had wrongly voted in

the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) in the last election.

"PBS wants to rule Sabah and cut itself from the Barisan for its own interest. By doing so, they hope that nobody will know if they make mistakes," he said.

Dr Mahathir's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali accompanied him to the launching.

The Prime Minister carried out the symbolic padi harvesting ritual and beating of the gong to mark the launching of the traditional festival.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah stole the limelight when they arrived by car at the compound.

Despite the drizzle, the

crowd left the packed hall to have a closer look at the Prime Minister and his wife. Many managed to shake hands with them.

Dr Mahathir's presence was significant because it was the first time that a Prime Minister had launched the festival since it was first officially celebrated in 1961.

A cultural troupe in traditional attire welcomed him and his wife to the beat of gongs and *tagunggak*, a musical instrument made from bamboo.

The Prime Minister went up the stage to join a choir sing a song entitled *Tadau Tagazo Kaamatan* (Happy Harvest Festival).

The celebration culminated with the *Unduk Ngadau* or beauty pageant featuring 10 finalists selected from 125 contestants.

Gloria Joseph, a 17-year-old lass from Papar, was adjudged champion. The first runner-up was 18-year-old Jenny Sharon Linus while second runner-up was Linda Susan Joe, 17, both from Penampang.

"It is a historic occasion because it is also the first time the launching was carried live on TV for the whole nation to see," said Datuk Kasitah Gadam, chairman of Sabah Umno's Kadazan, Dusun and Murut Special Task Force which organised the festival.