

Dr M: Don't let politics disrupt cultural harmony

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KOTA KINABALU: Political differences among Malaysians should not be allowed to disrupt cultural harmony in the country, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said if the differences were allowed to manifest, disharmony could lead to riots and innocent people would become victims.

"In Malaysia, people of various races visit each other during one another's festival and we live in harmony, understanding each other's culture," he said at the close of the month-long *Pesta Kamaatan* (Harvest Festival).

Dr Mahathir said during Hari Raya, students of the Kadazan and Dusun communities visited his house.

"Now, I am here with you to celebrate the *Kamaatan*," added Dr Mahathir, who wore the traditional Kadazan head gear.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Sakaran Dandai launched the celebrations, held at the Hongkod Koisaan, the Kadazan-Dusun Cultural Association centre in Penampang, near here.

All state ministers and United Sabah Dusun Association president Datuk Mark Koding attended the festival, but Datuk Jo-

seph Pairin (Hoguan Siou or paramount leader of the Kadazan-Dusun community) was absent.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived for a three-hour visit to attend the festival, said in other countries like Rwanda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, India, and Northern Ireland, ethnic differences had taken the lives of many.

"We must never allow this to happen here," he added.

Sakaran said the Barisan nasional government would unite the different communities in Sabah to restore political stability and bring benefits to the people.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir's wife, Datuk Dr Siti Hasmah Ali, crowned the Unduk Ngadau (Kaamatan Queen) 1994, Agatha Nora Lojunin from Penampang.

The runners-up were Louisa Liew Soon Yin from Likas and Glorine Diana Joseph from Api-Api.