

Dr M: Intensify efforts to boost multi-cultural activities

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KOTA KINABALU, Men. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants Malaysians of all races to intensify efforts to enhance multi-cultural activities to foster greater understanding.

The Prime Minister said such efforts should not be confined to only certain parts of the country.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, was opening the 12th Malaysian Cultural Festival at the Likas Indoor Stadium here tonight. It was organised by the Federation of the Malaysian Chinese Assembly.

He was happy to note that the three-day festival, which began on Saturday, was participated by all the ethnic groups. This is the first time the festival is being held in Sabah.

"This is clear proof of the tolerant attitude prevailing among Malaysians."

He said through such efforts, coupled with those of the Government, Sabah was experiencing rapid development and believed this would further raise the peo-

ple's living standards.

In view of its significance, he said, cultural activities must be preserved despite the country's achievements in various fields, including in science and technology, as culture is the identity of the Malaysian community.

Dr Mahathir spoke at length on the need for continued co-operation and understanding among the multi-racial people, citing tension, riots and other chaotic incidents caused by racial misunderstanding in other countries.

"But here (in Malaysia), we are lucky as, except for the riots in 1969 in Kuala Lumpur, there has been no chaos and the people live in peace and harmony," he said.

He said one of the reasons which had helped to promote closer relations among the people of the various races and religions was the Government's liberal attitude.

"There is no force in religion, for example. If there are people who change their faith, it is done of their own accord," he said.

Also present were Chief Minister Datuk Salleh Said, the federation's president Ng Teck Fong and organising chairman Datuk Seri Mohamed Sari Nuar.

Various cultural activities, including dances by all the ethnic groups in Sabah, exhibition of handicraft and traditional houses and cultural-related competitions were held.

Earlier, on arrival at the Kota Kinabalu airport's old terminal building Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah were given a rousing red-carpet welcome.

A cultural troupe from the Sabah Sports and Cultural Board was on hand to perform various local traditional dances.

Salleh led a long line of dignitaries, who included State Cabinet Ministers and heads of State Barisan Nasional component parties, to welcome the Prime Minister.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) president Datuk Chong Kah Kiat, State Legislative Assembly Speaker Datuk Hassan Alban Sandukong and State Secretary Datuk Khalil Datu Jamalul were also at the airport to receive Dr Mahathir.

Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah were driven straight to the Shangri-la's Tanjung Aru Resort (STAR), where they will be staying during the duration of their three-day official

visit.

After launching the festival, Dr Mahathir attended a dinner at STAR hosted by Salleh. A tight schedule awaits the Prime Minister tomorrow.

In the morning he will perform the ground-breaking ceremony for the Universiti Malaysia Sabah permanent campus at Likas Bay here and the Petronas Gas landing site at Kampung Gayang in Tuaran.

He will then proceed to the Mimpian Jadi Resort in Tuaran for lunch and briefing on the development of the resort.

In the afternoon, Dr Mahathir will perform the ground-breaking ceremony for the Kota Kinabalu Industrial Park before attending a State development briefing by Salleh.

On Wednesday morning, Dr Mahathir will chair the Federal Cabinet meeting at the new State Legislative Assembly Hall. In the afternoon he will launch a cultural conference organised by the Koisaan Cultural Development Institute.

Before leaving for Kuala Lumpur, the Prime Minister will launch Saega Airlines, a joint venture between the Sabah Government, Sarawak Government and Ekran Bhd.