

20 FEB 1996

Mahathir-Raya

DOUBLE CELEBRATIONS BRING MORE JOY TO PRIME MINISTER'S OPEN HOUSE

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 20 (Bernama) -- More than 10,000 Malaysians from all walks of life wished Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali "Selamat Hari Raya" at his open house here today.

Visitors, both local and foreign, began arriving at Sri Perdana, his official residence, as early as 8.30am.

Dr Mahathir said though most of the well-wishers were from the Indian community, the open house was no less merrier because Hari Raya Aidilfitri this year coincided with the Chinese New Year yesterday.

"I see it is very much merrier although we find that many of the people who came are from the Indian community because they did not go anywhere," he told reporters.

The majority of Chinese and Malays had returned to hometowns in other states to celebrate the Chinese New Year and Hari Raya with families.

Dr Mahathir said though the Malays and Chinese were busy with their own celebrations, they still found time to call on him for open house and to wish him "Selamat Hari Raya."

This reflected the good relations between the people of all races in the country, he added.

Dr Mahathir said he was very much taken by a novel greeting "Gong Xi-Raya" in a card given to him by a visitor which combined the Chinese New Year and Hari Raya greetings of "Gong Xi Fa Cai" and "Selamat hari Raya."

The celebrations, which coincide once every 32 years, and the long holidays did not stop well-wishers, many of them city residents, from calling on Dr Mahathir and his wife.

Streams of visitors began arriving at Sri Perdana at 8.30am, among them VIPs who included Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Cabinet minister and deputy ministers.

Not to be left out were the handicapped, priests and students. Some of the guests presented Dr Mahathir with bouquets of flowers and gifts while others requested for his autograph.

Meanwhile, about 8,000 people, among them several ministers and deputy ministers, attended open house hosted by Anwar and his wife at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC).

He distributed "duit raya" to children and the handicapped besides entertaining them to the Hari Raya fare. -- BERNAMA

ES DV LDB