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PM: It's more joyous this time

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said he noticed a more joyful spirit in this year's Deepavali celebration and attributed this to the country's economic recovery.

He said this was a good sign as a sound economy was vital to preserve peace and harmony in a multiracial country.

"For us to maintain good inter-racial relations and peace in the country, the economy must be good. When the economy is good, racial tension is unlikely.

"This is something we must achieve," he said at Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu's open house held at the Chung Hwa School hall today.

Dr Mahathir and his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali were among the Cabinet ministers and thousands who visited Samy Vellu to wish him a "Happy Deepavali".

Dr Mahathir and Samy Vellu also cut the cake, and fed a slice to each other. Their antics drew gales of laughter when Dr Mahathir pretended to bite Samy Vellu's fingers.

The Prime Minister said he felt all the festivals celebrated this year had a happier atmosphere.

"It seems like people have more money to spend. The shops and restaurants are full. This is a good sign."

Samy Vellu, in wishing all Malaysians a "Happy Deepavali", said the festival had become a national celebration.

"Deepavali is a celebration for all. In fact, I even saw some wishing the Prime Minister a 'Happy Deepavali'. This shows there is unity among the people, and support for the Prime Minister," he added.

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