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1,200 attend World Hakka Convention

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - More than 1,200 delegates from over 30 countries are attending the World 15th Hakka Convention which has as its theme "Towards Greater Cultural and Economic Co-operation."

Besides Malaysia, the delegates include those from India, Brunei, Indonesia, China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Taiwan, Australia and the United States.

Delegates will discuss various issues including enhancing the Hakka culture and relationship and the strengthening of their economies internationally at the four-day meeting.

In his message in the souvenir programme, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that Malaysia's Hakka community of about 1.5 million had grown into a cohesive force displaying not only vibrancy and entrepreneurship but had also made its mark in the different professions.

In his speech at the opening ceremony, Federation of Hakka Associations of Malaysia president Tan Sri Dr Jeffrey Cheah said Dr Mahathir's gesture in officiating at the convention was clear testimony of Malaysia's multi racial, cultural and religious society.

He said the event would go down in the historical records of the Hakka people as a unique occasion where a highly-respected, non-Chinese head of Government of a multi-racial country had given his blessings to the world Hakka community.

Cheah said one matter to be discussed came under the heading of "Hakkalogy" which is a study of the traditions, cultures and origins of the Hakkas.

Based on Chinese history books, he said the Hakkas were a group of Mandarins and others serving the Government in northern China.

They moved to central China in the year 317 to seek their fortunes, but war and famine forced them to migrate south.

Since then, they had been on the move to Asia, Europe and other parts of the world, participating actively in business, commerce, the professions and in the politics of the countries of adoption of their forefathers.

"No other Chinese clan goes to so much pains over ancestral records.

"Who knows, perhaps some of us may find long lost relatives from among the visiting delegates," he said.

At the ceremony, Cheah presented a cheque for RM100,000 to Dr Mahathir for the Association of Wives of Ministers and Deputy Ministers (Bakti).

The president of the association is Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

The money was raised during a recent karaoke competition organised by Cheah's wife Puan Sri Susan Cheah.

Dr Mahathir also presented certificates of appreciation and souvenirs to 25 federation members who had contributed more than RM30,000 each towards the organisation of the convention.

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