

Majority of the people are tolerant, says Dr Mahathir

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PUTRAJAYA, Wed. — The majority of Malaysians are tolerant, with only a handful who are against national integration making attempts to stir up racial discontent among the people, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the majority would prefer national integration if they were "not disturbed" or instigated by the handful of intolerant people.

"Only those who cannot accept the Malaysian culture feel that the integration of the Malay, Indian and Chinese cultures has been mixed up and it was something which was not good," he told re-

porters at his Hari Raya open house at his official residence here.

Dr Mahathir said this intolerant lot should instead be grateful for the uniqueness of the Malaysian culture.

"Just now, we saw Chinese children wearing Malay traditional costumes. Indian children also wear Malay costumes. These are the true Malaysians ... the ordinary Malay-

sians.

"This is very good and cannot be found in most other countries. We should be thankful for it."

He described the tradition of visiting and welcoming people from various races during the Hari Raya open house as "a beautiful experience".

"In Malaysia, we also see the Chinese and Indians wishing *Selamat*

Hari Raya to the Malays during Hari Raya. Similarly, during Chinese New Year, the Malays and Indians wish *Gong Xi Fa Cai* to the Chinese and for Deepavali, we hear the Malays and Chinese saying 'Happy Deepavali'.

"This is something we can be

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proud of as these are ordinary folk and they are very friendly with one another. I am extremely happy to see this," he said.

Dr Mahathir felt happy to see a larger crowd coming to wish him "*Selamat Hari Raya*" compared to earlier this year.

He was also overjoyed when Chinese and Indian children wished him "*Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri*" and kissed his hands, similar to the Muslim way of doing it.

"Their parents teach them to say these things. This is very heartening."

On the wishes and messages from foreigners who visited him today, Dr Mahathir said they were amazed to experience the uniqueness of the Malaysian culture as this never happened in their countries.

"They are so amazed that they plan to convey this uniqueness to their families and friends back

home."

On another note, Dr Mahathir was also asked whether new foreign buyers have indicated interest to buy a stake in national carrier Malaysia Airlines.

"We will have to see the conditions they insist upon should they buy into Malaysia Airlines ... this is because Malaysia Airlines has a social obligation to this country, which is one of the reasons why it is difficult for Malaysia Airlines to make a profit."

Dr Mahathir said this was important because the foreign parties would want to insist that Malaysia Airlines do away with its social obligation as it was not its duty to do so.

Asked whether the Government was willing to give up control of Malaysia Airlines should there be an attractive offer from abroad, Dr Mahathir said: "Control, no ... but even if it is for minority shareholding, they would still insist upon certain conditions."