

PM: Open house this year a beautiful experience

SUN 29. 12. 2000

PUTRAJAYA, Thurs: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday described his Hari Raya open house this year as a beautiful and happy experience for him.

Mahathir, who said the number of guests this year had increased, expressed delight particularly with the Chinese and Indian parents who taught their children to wish him *Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri*.

"They wished, shook and kissed my hands, while some gave personal messages. I feel very happy and excited with the situation ... it's a beautiful experience," he said at a press conference during the open house at Seri Perdana.

Mahathir said the fact that the different races in the country rejoice in each other's festive celebration is something to be proud of.

"The citizens are very friendly. Only those who adopt the Malaysian culture will know or understand that the cultures of Malays, Indians and Chinese are all mixed in this country and this is seen as though it's not good."

Mahathir said the country should be grateful that "in Malaysia, we have such things (as) the Chinese children who came here

wearing *baju melayu* and similarly, the Malays wearing *cheongsam* during Chinese New Year".

"I am of the opinion that the majority of Malaysians are tolerant and if nobody disturbs them, we can get the integration of all races in this country."

Earlier, Mahathir, his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, and daughter Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir greeted thousands of guests including cabinet ministers and businessmen.

Genting Bhd chairman Tan Sri Lina Goh Tong and family were the first to wish the prime minister *Selamat Hari Raya*.

Others included Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng, Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn and People's Progressive Party (PPP) president Datuk M. Kayveas.

Among the opposition leaders present were DAP secretary-general Kerk Kim Hock and vice-chairman Dr Tan Seng Giaw.

About 60,000 members of the public attended the prime minister's open house.