

JOY OF UNITY

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PM: It's a priceless gift that must be preserved

By NORMAN ONG

TANGKAK: Malaysians enjoy being able to work and play together in a multi-racial society. This should be cherished and treasured, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Describing national unity as "an invaluable gift which cannot be measured in material terms," the Prime Minister said:

"Let us not commit anything that can upset the racial co-existence and tolerance in place.

"At a time when people in other multi-racial countries are still clawing at each other, Malaysians have already advanced.

"This gives Malaysians — be they Malays, Chinese, Indians or bumiputras in Sabah and Sarawak — all the more reason to strengthen the bonds of understanding and tolerance among each other," he said when addressing a people's get-together at Dataran Ledang,

here, yesterday.

Present were Johor Mentri Besar and Ledang assemblyman Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman, Information Minister and Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also the MP for Pagoh.

Dr Mahathir said he was thankful that Malaysians of various communities could share meals because the menu took into account the sensitivities of the various races.

Malaysians also had no apprehensions about attending multi-ethnic functions because the communities had no reason to fear each other, he said.

"We must always remind ourselves of this joy so that we will not do things to hurt other people," the Prime Minister said.

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Umno man touched by Dr M's gesture

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Dr Mahathir said he was touched by the large turnout and the reception accorded him and his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali.

Among the people at the gathering was a Bakri Umno division member who was crippled in a road accident in Sabah two years ago.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, gave words of encouragement and told Norizan Kasbi, 29, to be strong in facing the future when they met at the Diamond Jubilee Hall.

Norizan, who was involved in the accident while campaigning for Barisan Nasional in the general election, broke down when Dr Mahathir hugged him.

The former Bakri Umno Youth information chief replied that he would return as an active member.

Dr Mahathir later attended a closed-door dialogue with Bakri and Segamat Umno division leaders before performing Friday prayers at Masjid Jamek Tangkak.

He later held meetings with the Pontian and Gelang Patah divisions.