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PM and wife join in festivities

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali joined hundreds of people from all races and religions to celebrate Christmas at an open house organised by the Christian Federation of Malaysia here today.

Dr Mahathir said it had become a part of Malaysian culture to celebrate the festival days of all races and religions adding that it had forged closer interaction between the people of various races and religions in the country.

"I am happy to be here as they (leaders of other faiths) have always visited me. Recently they joined me for 'break of fast' during the fasting month. It is a pleasure to be able to join the people in wishing them Merry Christmas."

Dr Mahathir was welcomed on his arrival by members of the St John's Cathedral choir.

The Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, Reverend Anthony Soter Fernandez DD, who hosted the event at his official residence at Jalan Bukit Nanas, in his welcome address expressed his gratitude to Dr Mahathir for visiting the open house.

In his official message to Christians in the country, Anthony Soter said the joy of Christmas could only be meaningful if Christians reached out to others, especially the poor, downtrodden, oppressed and sick, with compassion.

"Today, the tragic condition of refugees has become a compelling challenge to our conscience and the Church offers her love and assistance to all the refugees, irrespective of race or religion.

"Therefore, while keeping to the spirit of Christmas, let our festive season this year be modest. I appeal to all, especially our children that whatever is offered be the result of a sacrifice made during this festive season," he added.

As chairman of the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism, Anthony Soter said Malaysia being a land of different races, religions and cultures, the people had been blessed in celebrating each other's festivals.

"Let us strive to respect, accept each other and be responsible citizens. I wish all Christians - Merry Christmas and Happy New Year."

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