

23 OCT 2003

Mahathir-Deepavali

CONTINUE TO VISIT OPEN HOUSE- PM IN HIS LAST DEEPAVALI MESSAGE

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 23 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister in his last Deepavali message before he steps down next Friday has appealed to the new generation of Malaysians to continue visiting each other's open house and always remain united.

The new generation of Malaysians as inheritors of this country had an important role to play -- continuing with the spirit of tolerance and unity which had long been practised by this nation, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

Dr Mahathir said it was his fervent hope that the present attitude and spirit of unity would continue in this country as it would bring much benefit to the people.

The strong bond of unity and understanding among the various communities in Malaysia had made it easy for the government to focus on national development and bring progress to the people, he said.

The spirit of tolerance among the races in this country had won the admiration of other countries whose people too yearned for similar peace and tolerance, he said.

He urged Malaysians to continue visiting the festive open house and use the opportunity to strengthen friendly relations among them.

Dr Mahathir noted that the Malaysian way of life was unique and the open house concept was not found in other countries.

Even though Malaysia was an Islamic state with the majority of the people being Muslims, other citizens were free to practise their respective religions and this right was guaranteed in the Federal Constitution, the Prime Minister said.

"This is the country we love, the country which gives freedom to its people to practise their religions, cultures and traditions without any fear or threat."

This was the special thing about Malaysians, no matter what celebration it was or which race was celebrating, everyone would join in till the joy spread to all, the Prime Minister said.

This practice no doubt would bring them even closer, he added.

"Once more my wife and I wish all Malaysians a very happy Deepavali," the Prime Minister said.

-- BERNAMA

JM AHH AAM