

# Dr M: Cross-cultural marriages a boost for unity

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Cross-cultural marriages can strengthen national unity, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The former prime minister said different cultural backgrounds should not be a barrier for couples to tie the knot.

"Islam accepts anyone of diverse upbringings and traditions. And, it does not stop Muslims from practis-

ing their own cultures so long as it is within the scope of the Islamic teaching."

Dr Mahathir, who is the Islamic Welfare Organisation (Perkim) president, said although majority of the Muslims in Malaysia were Malays, it did not mean that the converts must discard their culture and embrace the Malay ways.

"We also should not assume that

converts, who hold on to their culture, have a weak grasp of Islam," he said at a cross-cultural wedding reception for 10 couples at Perkim headquarters in Jalan Ipoh yesterday.

Dr Mahathir also advised converts to maintain good ties with their non-Muslim families.

"Don't separate yourself from your own family once you embrace Islam.

You have to make the effort to maintain the family ties.

"Respecting your family is one of the teachings of Islam and other cultures."

Later, Dr Mahathir said Perkim would continue its programmes to help Muslim converts and thanked the government for the RM10 million allocation to be used for this purpose.