

Nyonya Kebaya's lesson on unity

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MELBOURNE: The humble Nyonya Kebaya has a lesson or two to teach about unity, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi.

"The Nyonya Kebaya represents the best of both the Chinese and Malay communities. It's about getting the best of both and turning it into something beautiful."

"When you see this, you will see what we are trying to do in our country," he told a crowd of about 300 guests at the launch of the "Nyonya Kebaya: Women's Costume from Malaysia" exhibition at the Immigration Museum here.

The exhibition is taken from the collection of his late wife Datin Seri Paduka Endon Mahmood and is the first showcase of traditional and contemporary women's clothing from Malaysia in Australia.

More than 70 kebaya and other Peranakan artefacts, will be on display in a 200-square-metre space until Sept 9.

Abdullah was joined by Australian Prime Minister John Howard's wife Janette Howard, Culture, Arts and Heritage Minister Datuk Seri Rais Yatim, his daughter Nori Abdullah and Leela Mohd Ali, the chief executive officer of Yayasan Budi Penyayang Malaysia (Penyayang), which organised the exhibition.

For most guests, it was their first good look at Peranakan clothes and culture.

Melbourne-based photographer Rodney Start said that the few kebaya he had seen in a documentary paled in comparison to the "real thing".

"It's exquisite".

Abdullah is scheduled to meet Howard during his stay here. — By Jessica Lim



Nori Abdullah (left) explaining the finer details of the nyonya kebaya to Janette Howard, wife of Australian Prime Minister John Howard, at an exhibition in Melbourne as her father Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Victoria Museum chief executive officer Dr J. Patrick Greene (right) look on. — Bernama picture