

Newspaper	THE STAR
Date	27 JUNE 2017

# Diversity is our strength

The Star - 28/6/2017 pg. 2

## Najib describes turnout at open house as extraordinary

**PUTRAJAYA:** Diversity is the nation's strength and this year's Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebration exemplified it by being, in the Prime Minister's words, "a complete celebration that brought forth spontaneous joy".

Millions of Muslims had just completed fasting for the holy month of Ramadan and welcomed the first day of Syawal, as their non-Muslim fellow Malaysians took the opportunity to join in the celebrations.

In Seri Perdana Complex here, about 75,000 Malaysians, dignitaries and tourists thronged Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's official residence on Sunday to meet the premier and his Cabinet members.

Visitors queued up from as early as 7am to shake hands with Najib and his deputy Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Clad in a brick-red Baju Melayu, Najib arrived at 11.40am, 20 minutes earlier than scheduled, and immediately greeted the guests who had been eagerly waiting for him.

The open house was from 10am to 4pm, with Najib scheduled to make his appearance at noon to greet visitors.

Earlier, Najib and his Cabinet members had gone to Istana Negara for breakfast with Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Muhammad V.

After breakfast with the King, Najib returned to Seri Perdana to welcome the thousands in attendance.

Cabinet ministers and their spouses took turns to greet the public, taking 30-minute slots throughout the open house session.

Najib and Dr Ahmad Zahid, however, were seen greeting the people almost throughout the session, taking only short breaks now and then.

At around 3pm, Najib, his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor and Dr Ahmad Zahid went to the Laman Sari tent area, where the visitors were served, to cut a cake.

Both Najib and Rosmah also wowed the crowd with a rendition of Jimmy Palikat's song *Anak Kampung*.

It was only at around 4.10pm that the Prime Minister finally sat down to have a meal and check his mobile phone.

The last group to shake hands with the dignitaries were the auxiliary police, civil defence force and other staff on duty.



**Jovial mood:** Minister of International Trade and Industry II Datuk Seri Ong Ka Chuan, Wee Liow, and their respective spouses (from left) Datin Seri Chan Beng Choo, Datin Seri Jessica Lim Hai Ean and Datin Seri Lee Sun Loo, sharing a light moment with Najib and Dr Ahmad Zahid at the Prime Minister's open house.

Watch the video  
[thestartv.com](http://thestartv.com)



Najib and Rosmah also took some time out around 1pm to address the rest of the nation through a special interview that was broadcast live over TV. In his message, Najib said the people played a vital role in maintaining peace and security.

He urged Malaysians not to be easily influenced by militant and extremist ideologies.

He described the turnout at Seri Perdana as extraordinary.

"This open house has been most meaningful for the people and for me as the Prime Minister because I was able to open the doors of Seri Perdana to various races.

"This is a complete celebration that has brought forth spontaneous joy.

"I was informed that the people queued all the way to the main road. I am touched that the people came from far and near because they wanted to ensure that ties between the people and leaders remained strong," he said.

Rosmah praised the security forces at the border areas for their sac-

rice because they had to be away from their families on Aidilfitri.

Cabinet ministers also reminded Malaysians that diversity was their strength and not a weakness.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein urged the people to continue defending this diversity so that it was not compromised by "irresponsible parties".

"We must realise that we cannot let a certain segment of society continue in their attempts to disunite us.

"In the context of security, I find that very worrying. If indeed there are cracks within our society ... irresponsible parties (would) exploit it.

"It would be hard to heal cracks grounded in race and religion if we don't take care of them properly," he said, thanking the Armed Forces personnel who were on duty during the celebrations for their sacrifice.

Dr Ahmad Zahid congratulated Najib and Rosmah on the successful open house.

He noted that, while standing with Najib for almost the whole afternoon to shake visitors' hands, he could see the happiness on the people's faces.

"If they just shook hands with me and the other ministers, I feel that they wouldn't be satisfied," he said.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai was happy to see the multiracial gathering.

He said Najib had steered the country towards good economic growth and put it on the right track for national transformation.

"Our growth was 5.6% for the first quarter of the year and we hope that with the transformation of greater Kuala Lumpur, the East Coast Rail Line and other high-impact projects, our country will become a developed nation in the near future," he said.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong said seeing Malaysians of all races unite to celebrate Hari Raya was proof of the Malaysian spirit.

"We are one nation in spite of our diverse backgrounds; we can live harmoniously and this is what we call Malaysia's strength.

"Diversity is our strength. It is not something that will distance us from one another," he said.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said it was heartening to note that the culture of open house was thriving.

"The fact that there were so many people at the Prime Minister's open house shows the political stability we have," he said.