

# Unity, respect key to progress

## M'sians urged to embrace diversity to build a stronger nation

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysians should be prepared to listen to and respect one another, while also strengthening each other as the country empowers its sustainable economy through positive values and humanity, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister spoke against those who were unwilling to accept diversity, saying that there is strength in everyone.

He also stressed that Bahasa Malaysia is the official language, but added that all races have the right to master their own languages, which should be respected.

"With global developments posing challenges to the country, there is a need to master various languages, including English.

"While Malay remains the core of our culture, we should also embrace the cultures of others," he said at the launch of the Malaysia Cultural Festival 2025 at Taman Tasik Titiwangsa last night.

Also present at the launch were Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories) Datuk Seri Dr Zaliha Mustafa, Tiong's deputy Datuk Khairul Firdaus Akbar Khan and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar.

On the festival, Anwar said it promotes the nation's strength and its diversity which is admired by even those from outside.

It showcases the sense of tolerance and appreciation of all the cultures, he said.

"We take pride in the peace and prosperity we have attained while celebrating the various cultures, songs and dances which reflect the great nation of ours," he said.

Tiong said the festival is not just an entertainment event, but a living manifestation of the heritage of the various races in Malaysia that celebrates diversity in an atmosphere of harmony, respect, love and kindness.

"The participation of people from various backgrounds reflects the Madani spirit which unites the people, thus preserving the harmony and sustainability of the country's culture.

"Our culture is not just art and heritage, but the core of our nation's identity and the foundation of our country's strength," he said.

"More than that, it is a people-to-people bridge across borders, connecting civilisations and uniting the hearts of people around the world in a spirit of friendship and unity and mutual respect."

In the economic context, Tiong said this cultural diversity opens up a huge space for growth, from



**Uniquely Malaysia:** Anwar with (from left) Tiong, Dr Zaliha and Shamsul Azri with the dancers after the launch of the Malaysia Cultural Festival event at Taman Tasik Titiwangsa. — IZZRAFIQ ALIAS/The Star



**Cultures that unite:** Performers captivating the crowd in colourful traditional outfits at the festival in Kuala Lumpur.

strengthening the tourism industry, expanding craft businesses, elevating traditional foods, to making performing arts a high-value product on the global stage.

The five-day festival, taking place from Sept 12 to 16 at Taman Tasik Titiwangsa, runs from 8am to midnight daily.

More than 300,000 visitors are expected to attend the festival, making it one of the biggest arts and cultural events of the year.

Among the attractions are international level games, national competitions, booths and exhibitions, Malaysian drum gala performances, multi-racial cultural shows and performances by top artistes.

