

Huge turnout at first UMS X'mas joy

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KOTA KINABALU: Spirit of moderation is the key to success in multi-ethnic and multi-religious Malaysia, said State Minister of Special Tasks Datuk Teo Chee Kang.

He said Malaysians are fortunate to experience the ethnic diversity in our country through the various festive seasons such as Hari Raya, Chinese New Year, Harvest Festival and Deepavali.

"The people must support and participate in these festive celebrations and understand more about other traditions and cultures in the country," he said, when officiating at the third Christmas celebration organised by Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) at its Dewan Canselor, Sunday. More than 3,000 people attended the event.

It was the first time that the Christmas celebration was held within the university campus. Previous Christmas celebrations were held at 1Borneo Hypermall because the university administration feared that parking would be inadequate. State Barisan Nasional component, Upko, then raised the matter with the Ministry.

Teo said the event was a meaningful celebration as it not only reflected an organisation's coopera-



Part of the large crowd. Teo is at centre.

tion in realising a harmonious atmosphere, but also showed the ability of UMS students in organising a major festive celebration.

He said unity among multiracial students involved in organising the event should be emulated by varsity students because solidarity was important in all aspects of life, especially when they entered the workforce.

On that note, Teo said he has been organising annual breaking of fast ceremonies with the Muslim community since he was elected as Tanjung Kapor Assemblyman in 2008, where he would don Malay attire, including songkok.

"After seeing my photos in the newspapers, an elderly Chinese man advised me not to dress in such a way (Malay attire) because the Chinese community might not feel comfortable.

"I asked him what was wrong if Chinese people wear Malay attire out of respect for the culture and religion of another race. What is wrong if a Kadazandusun-Murut descendent wears the traditional costume of others? What is wrong if a Muslim dons Chinese attire?"

Teo said he has seen Malay leaders wearing traditional Chinese attire during gatherings with the Chinese community in Kuala Lumpur.

"It also makes it easier for us to mingle with people worldwide who are of different skin colour, culture and religion. That is the integration policy, not assimilation," as said by our Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Teo hoped UMS would organise more such celebrations in future to enhance well-being among its student community. Also present were organising chairman Rendall Lee Ken Haw, Tuaran MP cum Upko acting president Datuk Wilfred Madius Tangau and Professor Vincent Pang.