

UMS celebrates Christmas in spirit of moderation

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KOTA KINABALU: The spirit of moderation is the key to success in the multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-religious community in Malaysia.

Minister of Special Tasks, Datuk Teo Chee Kang, said Malaysians were fortunate to experience the ethnic diversity in the country through the various festive seasons, such as Hari Raya, Chinese New Year, Harvest Festival and Deepavali.

He encouraged the people to support and participate in these festive celebrations to understand more about other traditions and cultures in the country.

Teo said this when officiating at the third edition of the Christmas celebration organized by Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) at its Dewan Canselor here on Sunday. More than 3,000 people attended the event.

It was also the first time that the Christmas celebration was held in the university campus, as previous celebrations were held at 1Borneo Hypermall.

Teo said the event was a meaningful celebration as it not only reflected an organization's cooperation in realizing a harmonious atmosphere, but also showed the ability of UMS students in organizing a major festive celebration.

He said unity among multi-racial students involved in organizing



Teo (third left) receiving a souvenir while Wilfred and Pang look on.

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 had been organizing annual breaking fast ceremonies with the Muslim community since he was elected as Tanjung Kapor assemblyman in 2008, where he would don the Malay attire, including a songkok.

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

"I asked him what is wrong if

Chinese people wear the Malay attire out of respect for the culture and religion of another race. What is wrong if a Kadazan Dusun Murut descendant wear the traditional costume of others? What is wrong if a Muslim dons Chinese attire?"

Teo further said that he had seen Malay leaders wearing traditional Chinese attires during a gathering with the Chinese community in Kuala Lumpur.

He pointed out that there is nothing wrong with Malaysians celebrating festive seasons such as Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Chinese New Year, Harvest Festival and Christmas regardless of race and religion.

In fact, it reflects the harmony

and unity of our diverse community, he said.

"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 also hoped that UMS would organize similar celebrations in the future to enhance the well-being of its students.

Also present were organizing chairman Rendall Lee Ken Haw, Tuanan member of parliament cum Upko acting president Datuk Wilfred Madius Tangau and Professor Vincent Pang.