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'Let our diversity unify us'

Don't allow the differences stop M'sians from mingling, says Lat

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IPOH: For cartoonist Datuk Mohammad Nor Khalid, whose work has brought Malaysians together, the "secret" is having no one telling them what to do.

"When I was young, no one told us what to do. We had this beautiful mingling of people from different backgrounds sitting in a classroom together."

Youngsters, he said, were drawn to each other's differences.

"You would want to know more about others. I think if youngsters don't have this characteristic, it's not normal and it shouldn't be that way," said the celebrated cartoonist better known as Lat.

Lat, 65, felt that some politicians today were dividing the people with their words instead of uniting them.

He recalled his school days when he got the chance to mix with classmates of other races in an English-medium boarding school.

"Coming from a Malay *kampung* and surrounded with people of the same skin colour, it wasn't until Year Six that I started mixing with non-Malays."

He spoke of meeting his friends in the cinemas and eating together with them.

"Naturally, parents would ask why I was meeting a Chinese friend at her house and reminded me to be careful as we had our restriction when it comes to food."

"It's true we have our differences but I think it shouldn't prevent us from mingling with one another, especially when you are young, as that is the age when you are most



Funny man: Lat showing some of his cartoon books.

impressionable," he said.

Reflecting on the 1970s especially in the aftermath of the 1969 racial riots, he said: "I had started drawing for an English daily. I knew it was a paper that was widely read by many people so I couldn't afford to just draw cartoons only about a certain race."

"I needed to widen my scope. So I started thinking, what do all of us Malaysians have in common? I wanted to draw something that everyone could relate to easily and laugh together."

Lat hit it with "*makan* time".

"So I started going to restaurants to observe how people from different background would sit together and eat," he said.

He spoke of how he drew inspiration from a Sikh wedding after see-

ing the wedding picture of a *chapati* shop owner which was displayed on the wall of the restaurant in Kuala Lumpur.

"I started getting myself exposed to the culture of different races because I want to give information through my drawings."

"After my work on the Sikh wedding was published, the response was tremendous from their community because they told me it's exactly what they go through during their weddings," he said.

Lat believed that the key to unite a culturally rich and diverse community like Malaysia was to find things that people have in common.

It was this belief that led him to attend the upcoming Anak-Anak Malaysia Walk, meant to celebrate



Malaysia's diversity and promote unity and understanding.

"I like anything that brings people together. To me, you must be able to see the mingling of different races in our Malaysian society, otherwise, it would only be just us," he said.

As a retired cartoonist, Lat said it was time now for the younger generations to act on their passion.

"Leave politics aside and bring people together," he said.

The Anak-Anak Malaysia Walk 2016, to be held ahead of the National Day celebrations, will kick off at the Bukit Bintang City Centre on Aug 14.

The 3.4km walk, starting from the junction of Jalan Imbi and Jalan Pudu at the site of the former Pudu Jail, will be flagged off by Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Seri Mohd Amin Nordin Abd Aziz.

#AnakAnakMalaysia Walk is organised by Star Media Group, in collaboration with Ecoworld. Other sponsors for the event include Car Sponsor: Proton, Gold Sponsor: Panasonic and Silver Sponsors: Tenaga Nasional and YES.

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