

Travel restrictions in place to protect lives, says PM

By MARTIN CARVALHO
mart3@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: Some flexibility has been given to allow families living near each other to have traditional Chinese New Year reunion dinners despite the Covid-19 travel restrictions, says Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (*pic*).

"The traditional reunion dinner practised by the Chinese community on the eve of the first day of the Chinese New Year can still be celebrated with meaning among family members.

"In view of this important tradition, the government has given a bit of flexibility and allows reunion dinners to be attended by not more than 15 family members living nearby on the eve of Chinese New Year," he said in his Chinese New Year message yesterday.

He said this also includes allow-



ing religious activities to be held at the temples based on the standard operating procedure (SOP).

Muhyiddin said it's crucial that those celebrating the festivity continue to be disciplined at all times, such as wearing face masks, keeping their physical distance and constantly washing their hands.

"If we are among family members who are in the high-risk group, protect them," he said.

Muhyiddin acknowledged that interstate and inter-district travel restrictions resulted in many people being unable to return to their hometowns or to meet their families.

"The restrictions are not to deny your freedom but for the good of all aimed at protecting lives, especially our families whom we love," he said.

He noted that priority, with regard to the restrictions, is to ensure that the chain of Covid-19 infections is broken to protect the lives of the rakyat and the SOP is meant to allow the celebration to be held in a safe manner.

For families living far apart or students forced to stay in colleges or university campuses, he said they can stay connected through video calls.

Muhyiddin hoped the celebration this year would bring happi-

ness and prosperity to all Malaysians.

"Make this celebration as a rich cultural and traditional source for Malaysians of different races and religions and a unifying factor for the mutual respect among each other," he added.

National Unity Minister Datuk Halimah Mohamed Sadique called on Malaysians to be inspired by the virtues that the year represented, such as diligence, patience and tenacity.

"Let our collective perseverance continue to be our pillar of strength as we overcome the Covid-19 pandemic together," she said in her Chinese New Year message.

Watch the video
TheStarTV.com

