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A day of joy and optimism

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Malaysians celebrated Hari Raya Aidilfitri today in a joyous mood, filled with solidarity and optimism despite the economic situation.

They thronged open house held by relatives, friends and national and State leaders.

Thousands of people - Muslims and non-Muslims, locals and foreigners - flocked to Seri Perdana to personally wish "Selamat Hari Raya" to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his family.

Similar scenes were repeated on a smaller scale nationwide.

A long queue of well-wishers had formed long before the gates opened at 10am and were personally greeted by Dr Mahathir and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali.

Later, the crowd - including Cabinet Ministers, foreign dignitaries and others - was treated to festive dishes such as ketupat, lemang and rendang and cakes such as kuih lapis and cookies.

Yang Di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar and Raja Permaisuri Tuanku Najihah earlier performed the Aidilfitri prayers at the National Mosque accompanied by Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah.

Also present for the prayers were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Cabinet Ministers and prominent businessmen.

The King and Queen later received a host of dignitaries at a reception at Istana Negara.

The 300-over guests included Cabinet ministers, former ministers and ambassadors and high commissioners.

They were treated to a feast of Hari Raya delicacies including rendang and traditional cakes.

Romanian Ambassador Eugen Popa, who was with his wife Anca Maria Monica, said:

"It is always an honour and pleasure to be invited by His Majesty to celebrate the joyous occasion of Hari Raya."

After the reception, the King and Queen presented duit raya and goodies to about 250 palace staff.

In the afternoon, Anwar and his wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail held their open house at the Putra World Trade Centre.

In Klang, the Raja Muda of Selangor, Tengku Idris Shah who is the acting Sultan and members of the royal family also had their hands full.

They entertained members of the public who visited Bukit Kayangan in Shah Alam to extend their greetings and well wishes.

People also gathered at Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar's official residence in Bukit Megawati to extend their greetings.

In Seremban, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad and his wife, Puan Seri Hazizah Tumin played host to more than 3,000 guests who turned up at their official residence in Jalan Tasik from 10am to noon.

In Ipoh, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib and his wife, Raja Puan Sri Noora Ashikin Raja Abdullah, entertained hundreds of people who dropped in at his official residence.

The Menteri Besar later hosted a tea party which was graced by Sultan Azlan Shah and the Raja Permaisuri Perak Tuanku Bainun.

In Johor Baru, Hari Raya was celebrated moderately compared to previous years.

The morning, which was marked by a cool shower, saw the Sultan of Johor

Sultan Iskandar leading a congregation of 3,000 worshippers at the Sultan Abu Bakar Mosque.

Also present were the Tunku Mahkota of Johor Tunku Ibrahim Ismail, the Tunku Bendahara, members of the State Executive Council and heads of Government departments.

The Sultan reminded the rakyat to live prudently, to guard against frivolous spending and to avoid wastage in view of the present economic situation.

The Sultan and Sultanah Zanariah later hosted an open house for the public at the Istana Besar while Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman and his wife Datin Professor Dr Jamilah Ariffin played host to more than 4,000 people at their open house.

In Kuala Terengganu, hundreds of people thronged the official residence of Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad at Seri Iman for their open house.

They arrived after prayers as early as 9am, to wait for the arrival of Wan Mokhtar and his wife Toh Puan Asiahton Fadlullah Suhaimi, who earlier had an audience with the Sultan of Terengganu at Istana Badariah.

In Kota Baru, the Sultan of Kelantan and Tengku Mahkota joined hundreds of people for prayers at the Masjid Muhammadi.

After prayers, the Sultan and the Tengku Mahkota met the people to offer Hari Raya greetings while Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat led the prayer congregation at Kampung Pulau Melaka mosque.

In Kota Kinabalu, Hari Raya was celebrated on a moderate scale with many taking the opportunity to visit family and friends.

Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Sakaran Dandai joined other Muslims for prayers at the State mosque in Sembulan, near here.

Many, including VIPs and other State dignitaries also visited Sakaran and his wife Toh Puan Rukaiyah Panglima Abdullah at their official residence in Istana Road.

Later in the afternoon, Land and Cooperative Development Minister Datuk Osu Sukam hosted an open house at his Likas residence.

In Kuching, Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Ahmad Zaidi Adruce entertained Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, State Cabinet Ministers and business leaders at the Astana on the first day of Hari Raya.

He will entertain the public there tomorrow.

Hundreds of people, also turned up at the State Indoor Stadium where the Chief Minister and his wife Puan Sri Laila held their open house.

The other ministers who held open house today were Minister of Industrial Development Datuk Abang Johari Tun Openg, Minister of Agriculture and Food Industries Datuk Adenan Satem and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha.

In Penang, the celebrations were rather low-key both at houses of VIPs and other Muslims.

Leading the way in the celebration were Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Mohd Shariff Omar and Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Ibrahim Saad.

Abdullah and his wife Endon Mahmood played host in their kampung house to Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and his wife Puan Sri Chui Kah Peng, State Executive Councillors and villagers who came from all parts of the State to wish them well.

In Alor Star, neither the heat nor the dysfunctional traffic lights stopped folks from enjoying Hari Raya.

Hundreds also thronged open houses including at Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid 's official residence in Mentaloon to savour a spread of roti canai, satay, laksa and cakes.

The Sultan of Kedah also held an open house at the Anak Bukit palace

after morning prayers with Sanusi, exco members and State assemblymen at the Masjid Zahir.

In Malacca, about 3,000 Muslims joined the Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Syed Ahmad Shahabuddin for prayers in the State mosque, Masjid Al-Azim this morning.

Present were Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin and several State Assemblymen.

After the prayers, many took the opportunity to extend their festive greetings to Syed Ahmad and other State leaders.

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