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Joy, unity mark Hari Raya revelries

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Malaysians celebrated Hari Raya Aidilfitri today in the true spirit of muhibbah - with joy, unity and optimism - despite the economic situation.

They trooped, in all their finery, to the open house of relatives, friends and national and State leaders.

Those who visited the country's leaders had to contend with overwhelming crowds, especially at the open house of the Prime Minister and his deputy where tens of thousands poured in to meet their leaders.

Those visiting were served a variety of Hari Raya goodies, ranging from lemang, ketupat and rendang to all kinds of colourful cookies.

Muslims made their way to the nearest mosque first thing in the morning for their prayers and thanksgiving to Allah.

The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Najihah, accompanied by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, were among the thousands who performed their prayers at Masjid Negara.

Also present were newly-appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, several Cabinet Ministers and ambassadors of Muslim nations.

The King and Queen later held a reception at the Istana Negara for dignitaries and VIPs. Among those who attended the reception were Cabinet Ministers and envoys.

In Seremban, more than 5,000 people visited Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad and his wife Puan Seri Hazizah Tumin at their official residence in Jalan Tasik from 10am to noon.

In Kota Baru, as early as 8am, Muslims began converging on mosques in their respective areas for the Hari Raya Aidilfitri prayer before going to relatives and friends' houses to seek for forgiveness.

Many also took the opportunity to attend open houses held by some of the leaders in the State.

Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, who had earlier led the Hari Raya prayer at his mosque at Kampung Pulau Melaka, had a busy time attending to guests

Meanwhile, the Sultan of Kelantan joined Muslims in the State for the Hari Raya prayer at the Muhammadi mosque and later went to the Istana Balai Besar to receive Hari Raya wishes from his subjects.

In Ipoh, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib and his wife Raja Puan Sri Noora Ashikin Raja Abdullah greeted thousands of well-wishers who thronged his open house on the first day of Syawal today.

In Kota Kinabalu, Muslims in the State celebrated Hari Raya Aidilfitri on a moderate scale, with some 5,000 attending prayers at the State mosque in Sembulan near here.

Yang di-Pertua Negeri Sabah Tun Sakaran Dandai who attended the prayer later hosted an open house at the Istana Negeri for State dignitaries and members of the public.

Parti Bersatu Sabah president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan and other PBS leaders were also seen at the Istana, apart from Parti Bersekutu secretary-general Datuk Monggoh Orow.

In Johor Baru, Hari Raya celebrations were on a much happier tone in the city compared with the previous year, revealing the positive effects of the country's economic recovery on the people.

Menteri Besar Datuk Ghani Othman said the success of the Government's community projects and unity programmes had also served well in promoting the spirit of Hari Raya among the multi-racial community here.

The Hari Raya celebration in the State started with the Sultan of Johor's open house at Istana Besar which was attended by Ghani and about 3,000 guests, after morning prayers at the Sultan Abu Bakar mosque.

In Kuantan, the Sultan of Pahang joined his subjects for prayers at Masjid Sultan Ahmad in Pekan. Also present were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob, Deputy Menteri Besar Datuk Hasan Arifin and other State dignitaries.

In Klang, the first day of Hari Raya Aidilfitri was held on a moderate scale.

After a two-year gap, the Sultan of Selangor opened his palace at Bukit Kayangan in Shah Alam to greet relatives, friends and well-wishes.

The Ruler together with Tengku Permaisuri Selangor Siti Aishah welcomed their 5,000-odd guests from 10am to 1pm.

"After two years, with the blessings of Allah I am able to open my doors to greet the people of my state on Hari Raya day. I must thank the good Allah for giving me good health so that I can be with my people on such an auspicious day," he said.

Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar and his wife Datin Wan Noor Daud also had their hands full when more than 15,000 people came a-calling to their official residence in Bukit Megawati.

In Kuala Terengganu, more than 300 people of different races and creeds turned up at Menteri Besar Tan Wan Mokhtar Ahmad's official residence at Batu Buruk for his open house.

In Alor Star, Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid held an open house at his official residence in Mentaloon.

In Malacca, the Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Syed Ahmad Shahabuddin and Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin joined thousands of others in performing their Hari Raya prayers at the State Al Azim mosque here.

In Arau, the Raja and Raja Perempuan of Perlis performed prayers with their subjects at Masjid Negeri. Present were Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim and the state mufti, Datuk Alim Panglima Haji Mat Jaya Hussin.

In Kuching, Sarawak Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Ahmad Zaidi Adruce Muhammed Noor joined about 1,000 Muslims for a special prayer session at Masjid Jamek, the state mosque, at about 8.30am today in conjunction with Hari Raya Aidilfitri.

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