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Mahathir-Raya

WELL-WISHERS THROG DR MAHATHIR'S HARI RAYA OPEN HOUSE

By: Paramjit Kaur and Liew Sim Kien

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 27 (Bernama) -- Tens of thousands of well-wishers from all walks of life, including foreigners, thronged Seri Perdana, the official residence of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, to wish him and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali a "Selamat Hari Raya".

"The crowd seems to be bigger this time compared to the last Raya," Dr Mahathir told a news conference at the end of the first session of his Hari Raya open house here today.

Undeterred by the blazing sun, the crowd made its way to the banquet hall just to greet Dr Mahathir and his wife.

Dr Mahathir, smartly dressed in a purple baju Melayu, and Dr Siti Hasmah, looking lovely in a green baju kurung, warmly greeted the seemingly unending line of visitors from 9.30 this morning.

Yuzura Ide, a Japanese national, brought her family to Seri Perdana for the second time as she was very impressed when she came for the last open house in January.

Yuzura, a teacher at a Japanese school in Subang, said the open house this time around was better organised.

Mohamad Geffri, 52, an Australian who embraced Islam three and a half years ago, said he came to wish the prime minister "Selamat Hari Raya" after the morning prayer at Masjid Negara.

Looking smart in his purple baju Melayu and songkok, Mohamad Geffri said his frequent visits to Malaysia inspired him to convert to Islam.

"I feel this is the only way to learn about Malaysia," said the retired consultant engineer.

Wheelchair-bound Kala Kuppam, 32, from Shah Alam, came to Seri Perdana accompanied by her five brothers.

Kala, who was paralysed from the waist down following an accident in 1989, said she was happy to have a chance to meet the prime minister on her first visit to Putrajaya.

Forty orphans from Ozanam Orphanage in Petaling Jaya also did not miss the opportunity to shake hands with Dr Mahathir and his wife.

Senior citizen Tan Siew Hwa, 82, accompanied by her two teenage granddaughters, queued for almost three hours to meet the prime minister and to take photographs with him.

About 100 members of the Indian Progressive Front (IPF), led by its president Datuk M.G. Pandithan, came dressed in red, the party's official colour, to show their support for the prime minister and the ruling Barisan Nasional.

Well-wishers were also treated to a free-flow of "teh tarik", a popular hot drink in Malaysia, courtesy of the Persatuan Pengusaha Restoran Muslim Malaysia (PPRMM).

PPRMM president Jamarulkhan Kadir said a total of 8,000 tins of condensed milk and 80 kilogrammes of tea-dust were used in making some 60,000 cups of "teh tarik".

Among the visitors included Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein and Bernama, the national news agency, chairman Datuk Kadir Jasin.

-- BERNAMA

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