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100,000 at national Hari Raya do

Dan Guen Chin

JOHOR BARU, Sat. - Dataran Bandaraya was today a sea of people from all walks of life and of different nationalities as they flocked to celebrate the inaugural national-level Hari Raya Open House.

More than 100,000 people filed through the barriers during a six-hour period to enjoy the food and entertainment.

The turn-out drew smiles from Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, whose ministry organised the event with the co-operation of the Johor Government.

Even the weather was kind too. There was no rain when some had been forecast in the morning.

There was plenty of food to go around even as the crowd started streaming in as early as 9am for the big do which was scheduled to start at 10am.

The traditional laksa Johor, the State's famous nasi beriyani gam and mee rebus, were served at the 100 stalls erected in the area.

When the time for leaving arrived, some lucky ones managed to shake the hands of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail, Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Fauziah Tengku Abdul Rashid, and the Sultan and Sultanah of Johor.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali also went on a walkabout.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman were there too.

Singapore Deputy Prime Minister Brig Gen Lee Hsien Loong, who attended the open house, spent a few minutes signing autographs and posing for pictures with his fellow Singaporeans.

Lee said the event was a "good way to foster relations between Singaporeans and Malaysians, and I am humbled by the experience".

Singaporeans were not the only foreigners there. Tourists from China, the United States and Taiwan were also there.

The foreign media such as Thailand's Channel 9, Indonesia's RCTI, and Singapore's Media Corp TV and Straits Times TV had their crews there too. All in all, 600 journalists, foreign and local, were accredited to cover the event.

news@nstp.com.my

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