

25 DEC 2001

Christmas-Round-up

JOYOUS CHRISTMAS AS M'SIAN CHRISTIANS HOLD OPEN HOUSE

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 25 (Bernama) -- In the unique Malaysian style of merry-making, Christians in the country held open house to share a joyous Christmas today with fellow citizens from the other communities and faiths.

This time around it was the turn of the Christians to play host for the festive merry-making just a week after the Muslims celebrated Aidilfitri following completion of their Ramadan fast.

While fair weather was a boon to the merry-making in the city here and some other west coast towns, current floods in the peninsular east coast somewhat spoiled the joy of people whose movement to churches for the morning mass and open house was restricted by inundated roads.

The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali attended the open house jointly hosted by the Christian Federation of Malaysia and Roman Catholic Archbishop Rev Anthony Soter Fernandez at Fernandez's residence in Jalan Bukit Nanas in the afternoon.

Earlier, Christian city-dwellers as well visiting foreigners like Australian Jordan Wright flocked to the St John's Church in Bukit Nanas for their Christmas mass.

Wright, when approached outside the church later, said this was the second time that he and his family celebrated Christmas in Kuala Lumpur.

"What sets Christmas in this country apart from back home is that people from the various communities and religions join in the merriment," Wright said.

Filipina maid Patricia Estrada said the sizeable Filipino community in the city helped give the touch of home to their Christmas celebration here especially when preparing their indigenous food and drinks.

In KUCHING, the Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Abang Muhammad Salahuddin and the Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud called on Christian community and political leaders at their separate open house.

In KOTA KINABALU, merry-making functions hosted by political parties such as the United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation in Penampang and Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah at the Magellan Sutera Hotel and Spa in Kota Kinabalu were well-patronised.

Their special guests include the Sabah Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Sakaran Dandai, the Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Lajim Ukin, and Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein who in turn hosted an Aidilfitri open house at Wisma Muis also in Kota Kinabalu.

In PENANG, several hotels held special events for guests to add to the Christmas gaiety, notably the Mutiara Beach Resort in Batu Ferringhi where a Santa Claus para-sailed to distribute gifts to 150 children gathered at the beach there.

Mutiara general manager Peter Gibbons said that over the past five Christmases the hotel had used various modes of transportation for Santa Claus to deliver toys, including by "banana boat", jet ski and three-wheeler big bikes.

In KLANG, Christians gathered for their Christmas morning mass at the Church of Lourdes in Tengku Kelana Street and honoured senior citizens at the Klang Gospel Hall later in the afternoon.

In MELAKA, Christmas rejoicing was very visible in the Portugese settlements of Ujong Pasir and Bandar Hilir where guests were served with the special dish of "karisenko" (chicken rendang with long beans).

In ALOR SETAR, several couples took advantage of the Christmas holiday today to hold wedding receptions.

-- BERNAMA

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