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King to grace Raya open house

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JOHOR BARU, Wed. - The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail is expected to grace the inaugural National level Hari Raya Open House at the Dataran Bandaraya here on Saturday.

Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said the King together with the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi are also expected to attend the occasion.

The Sultan of Johor, the Tunku Mahkota of Johor and Johor's Menteri Besar, Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman would also be present, Abdul Kadir said.

Speaking at a Press conference at the Hyatt Regency Johor Baru hotel today, Abdul Kadir said the city is gearing up to host the big bash from 10am to 4pm.

He said there are plans to celebrate the other festivals in the same manner and this includes the Chinese New Year, Deepavali, Christmas, the Sarawak Gawai Festival and Pesta Keamatan (Sabah Harvest Festival).

"At least seven Singapore Ministers led by their Deputy Prime Minister Brigadier General Lee Hsien Loong are also expected to attend," he said.

A host of cultural performances and concerts featuring local and foreign artistes from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore would be held. Among the celebrities are Jamal Abdillah, Ah Niu and Zhang Di.

"We would like Malaysians from all walks of life and particularly the non-Muslims to join in the celebration. Their participation is encouraged as we want to show our solidarity as a nation.

"And we are also inviting our neighbours from Singapore to join in, too," said Abdul Kadir.

He said entry into the country would be made easier for those coming in from the Causeway and the Second Link with minimal passport checks.

"Once here, free local bus services would be provided at 12 pick-up points from the major hotels in the city to the Dataran Bandaraya," he said.

The event organised by the State Government and co-organised by the Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry, would have 12 varieties of food to cater for least 25,000 people.

"We hope the Singaporeans will stay overnight as we would be having a midnight sale on the same day," he said.