

22 dec 2002

Agong-Aidilfitri (Pix)/BM

AGONG LAUNCHES NATIONAL AIDILFITRI OPEN HOUSE

JITRA, Dec 21 (Bernama) -- Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail tonight launched the National-Level Aidilfitri Open House in a colourful ceremony highlighting the solidarity spirit of the multi-racial community.

An estimated 200,000 people of various races from all over the state came to the function since it started at 6pm.

The function, held at the Taman Tasik Bandar Darulaman, Jitra created history when it was also attended by Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, members of his cabinet and about 20,000 people from Thailand.

Also present were Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and members of the Malaysian cabinet.

About 500 foreign delegates comprising journalists and photographers from Japan, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan Turkey, Saudi Arabia, France and Spain; including overseas tourism agency representatives were specially invited to witness the multicultural aspects of the country. After the speeches by Culture, Tourism and Arts Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir and Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Razak Syed Zain, the king accompanied by the Kedah Sultan launched the opening ceremony.

They placed the ketupat pulut wrapped with plam leave into the pot.

Then, a large replica of the ketupat emerged in front of the stage and slowly opened into two. This was immediately followed by fireworks.

The ketupat is favourite among the northern people in the country, especially during Hari Raya Aidilfitri.

The people were then entertained to cultural performances reflecting the diverse culture of the country's plural society.

In addition, there were also songs by famous artistes such as the KRU group, Erra Fazira and Siti Nurhaliza who captivated the audience.

Dr Mahathir, who celebrated his 77th birthday yesterday, was also given a surprise birthday present of "pulut kuning" or yellow glutinous rice prepared in traditional manner.

As the "pulut kuning" was presented to the Prime Minister, the people present sang "Happy Birthday" in English and "Selamat Hari Jadi" in Bahasa Malaysia followed by a fireworks display forming the words "Happy Birthday Dr M".

The event ended with a song "Malaysia Truly Asia" which was presented by members from the Istana Budaya, followed by fireworks that was designed "Daulat Tuanku".

Earlier, the arrival of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Fauziah Tengku Abdul Rashid, Kedah Sultan and Sultanah were welcomed by Abdul Kadir.

The arrival of the royal entourage was graced with full Malay customs and warriors carrying bunga manggar.

This was followed by the Negaraku which was played by the Royal Malaysia Police band.

-- BERNAMA

TEAM VP AO