

28 DEC 2002
Melaka-Christmas
100,000 ATTEND NATIONAL CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

MELAKA, Dec 28 (Bernama) -- More than 100,000 Malaysians and foreigners attended the national level Christmas open house celebration at the Hang Tauh Mall, here tonight.

Thousands of visitors converged at the mall since 3pm to celebrate the event.

Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalulail and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Fauziah Tengku Abd Rashid arrived at the venue at 9.15pm.

The royal couple arrived in special horse carriage from the Golden Legacy Hotel and were accompanied by the Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Syed Ahmad Shahabudin and Toh Puan Marfuza Sheikh Osman.

Also present were Dr Mahathir, his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam, Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and Minister in Prime Minister's Department Tan Sri Bernard Dompok.

The climax of the open house was when the king switched on the lights that decorated the Christmas trees along Hang Tauh Mall, followed by the fireworks.

Local entertainers like Senario, Francisca Peters, Kenny Lee, the Baba and Nyonya group, and the Portuguese community cultural group were present to entertain the guests tonight.

The Christmas event in Melaka today was the last of the six open house programme organised this year by the Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry.

Last week, Kedah hosted the Hari Raya Aidilfitri open house -- Chinese New Year in Ipoh (Feb 16), Gawai festival in Kuching (June 8), Tadau Keamatan (harvest festival) in Kota Kinabalu (June 15) and Deepavali in Seremban (Nov 4).

Earlier in his speech, chief minister Mohd Ali said the open house reflected the racial harmony that existed in the country, especially in the state since the era of the Malay Sultanate in Melaka.

He added the open house was not only promoted within Malaysia, but also in overseas through the internet which attracted tourists from Singapore, Britain, Netherlands, Portugal, Indonesia and Thailand.

Mohd Ali said Melaka is prepared to host the open house event next year if the ministry allows them to do so.

Meanwhile, Abdul Kadir said all the six events showed the cultural diversity and racial unity in Malaysia.

Previously, the open house concept was only practised in a small scale during Hari Raya celebration, but now it had become a popular event among other races and this would help to create Bangsa Malaysia much faster.

-- BERNAMA
SBS NO MYD VP