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Open House boost for tourism

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JITRA, Fri. - The Government's efforts to organise national open houses to celebrate festivities has generated massive publicity for Malaysia's tourism promotion abroad.

Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said today the coverage by international media and tour operators invited to these events would directly promote Malaysia in their respective countries.

"We have found an effective way of promoting our country and culture by organising six open houses a year and getting foreign media coverage," he said after visiting the Bandar Darulaman theme park here, which is the venue for the National Hari Raya Aidilfitri Open house celebration tomorrow.

The ministry has invited 400 foreign journalists, including crews from 22 TV stations and tour operators under the Media Familiarisation programme.

"They come here not only to cover the event but also to visit other interesting places.

"When they return, they will write articles and features in their newspapers, magazines and television."

Another 254 international travel agents would attend the event.

Meanwhile, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain said yesterday Kedah was honoured to host the National Hari Raya Aidilfitri Open House tomorrow.

The event would not only be graced by royalty and national leaders, but also by Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his ministers.

He said this would be the first time a foreign leader and his entire Cabinet were attending such an event.

"This is the first time Kedah has been asked to host a national open house and who knows when our turn will come again," he said.

Syed Razak said the Prime Minister's attendance would also be meaningful, as it would be held just one day after Dr Mahathir celebrates his 77th birthday (Dr Mahathir was born on Dec 20, 1925).

The Menteri Besar, however, kept mum when asked whether anything special would be included in the evening's programme to celebrate Dr Mahathir's birthday.