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A scene of happy fellowship at the open house of Abdullah at PWTC

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's Hari Raya open house at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) attracted thousands of people from all walks of life.

VIPs, including Cabinet ministers, Barisan Nasional component party leaders and corporate leaders were seen in happy fellowship. The crowd swelled in the first two hours of the open house, which started at 2pm.

Well-wishers included foreign tourists who took the opportunity to get a taste of the Malaysian open house tradition.

Abdullah greeted visitors at the main door leading to Dewan Tun Ismail, where the open house was held.

P. Jeyapalan, who turned up with his wife and three children, said it had been a family tradition to visit open houses during Hari Raya to be part of the celebrations, and also because his children wanted to meet the country's leaders.

They had attended Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Hari Raya open house in Putrajaya earlier.

Wheelchair-bound Chrystyn Lee said the visit to Abdullah's open house gave her a chance to cheer up her new Indonesian maid Tina Hamdi, who could not be with her family for the celebration.

"I wanted her to get a feel of the Malaysian Hari Raya atmosphere.

"This visit gave me a chance to come out of my house and mingle with Malaysians of all races and even meet Government leaders."

New Zealander A.J. Hackett was "fascinated" by the open house concept because people welcomed complete strangers, especially when high-level officials opened their doors with relatively little security.

"There is a lot of power and good energy here," he said. He was in the country for business but said he enjoyed understanding lifestyles of people in places he visited.