

Thousands throng open house at Istana Negara
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About 20,000 people attended the open house hosted by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Nur Zahirah at Istana Negara earlier today.

Tuanku Mizan and Tuanku Nur Zahirah, who were accompanied by Najib and Rosmah, exchanged greetings with the guests who had waited at the palace gates from 9am. The open house for the public was from 11.40am to 1pm.

Their Majesties also hosted open house for dignitaries, from 10am to 11.30am.

Tuanku Mizan and Tuanku Nur Zahirah welcomed all the visitors and gave away 'duit raya' (cash) to children.

All guests also received a souvenir. They were then ushered to canopies in the compound of the palace where food and drinks were served.

Their Majesties' five-year term as Yang di-Pertuan Agong and Raja Permaisuri Agong is scheduled to end in December.

The rush to attend the open house caused a three-kilometre traffic jam near the palace, made worse by people parking their vehicles on the road shoulders leading to the main gate.

Baju Melayu in the pattern of M'sian flag

One of the guests, Hashim Mohamad, who wore a baju Melayu in the pattern of the Malaysian flag, said he was thrilled to attend the open house at the Istana Negara for the first time.

Hashim, 54, fondly referred to as Pak Asyiem Songkok, said he was celebrating both Aidilfitri and the 54th anniversary of the country's independence which falls tomorrow.

"Although I am not that well, I wanted to be here with the people to celebrate the occasion with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong," he said.

The Malaysian flag attire and songkok were sewn by his wife, he said, adding that he now had five of these suits.

Swedish tourist Ann-Marie Hanssen, 34, said she had come to the palace on a tour and decided to join the people to attend the open house.

"I just came here to visit the palace. It looks very nice. I have been queuing for a long time. Very hot, but wonderful.

"I have been in Malaysia for a month with my husband who is working here and this is the first time I am coming to the palace, and I am very happy.

"Malaysian culture is very interesting and they (Malaysians) are very kind people. We like it very much here," she said.

- Bernama