

# Event a big success

Ruler hopes to make programme an annual do after a huge turnout

By **HAMDAN RAJA ABDULLAH**  
metrose@thestar.com.my

**MUAR:** Johor ruler Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar hopes to make the grand *Santai di Jambatan Sultan Ismail* programme an annual event following the success of the first event held on Sunday night.

The event, where the bridge spanning Sungai Muar between Bandar Maharani and Tanjung Agas was turned into a park-like venue, attracted more than 40,000 people.

It was part of a five-day five-night celebration organised in conjunction with the ruler's 54th birthday who also declared Bandar Maharani as *Bandar DiRaja* (Royal town).

The bridge and all roads leading to it, which were closed between 3pm on Sunday and 5am on Monday, were filled with people who wanted to watch boat processions and huge fireworks that night.

Residents from all walks of life started to fill the bridge, the Laman Maharani recreational spot along Jalan Maharani and along river bank on both sides as early as 7pm.

By 8pm the roads leading to the town from Jalan Salleh, Jalan Bakri and Jalan Temenggong Ahmad were congested as people were looking for spots to park their cars.

The Muar municipal council had also turned parts of the stretch on



**Looking relaxed:** Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar (right), Abdul Ghani (center) and Mohd Mokhtar (left) looking at the boat parade float from the Muar bridge to celebrate Maharani being declared a Royal Town.

the bridge into a night market area with 140 stalls selling drinks, food and even toys for the children.

Council president Zulkiflee Abbas said the *Santai bersama Tuanku* programme on the bridge was a very special event to allow the Ruler to meet his subjects without observing protocol.

Sultan Ibrahim, who was accompanied by Mentri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman and Johor Police Chief Deputy Comm Datuk Mohd Mokhtar Mohd Shariff arrived at the bridge at about 8.40pm.

The ruler decided to walk to the middle of the more than one kilometre bridge to watch floats of beautifully decorated vessels passing under the bridge.

He joined the thousands of residents watching the floats standing

up while talking with villagers who were near him and shaking hands with them.

He was very happy to see the huge crowd of people from all races filling not only the bridge but along both riverbanks and roads along both sides of the river.

"I think we should close the bridge once a year and organise this event annually," he said.

The Ruler then asked the crowd around him whether they like to see similar event and the bridge closed once a year and the crowd shouted 'Yes, Tuanku!'

The Ruler repeated the question twice and was happy that the people of Muar wanted the event to be made an annual event.

After spending about 30 minutes on the bridge Sultan Ibrahim and

other leaders, including UDA Holdings Berhad chairman Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed left the bridge.

However, the crowd continued to remain on the bridge and in several parts of the town and at Tanjung Agas waiting for the big firework show.

And all were thrilled, including old folks and children, when at 10.30pm, fireworks started to brighten the night sky over the river fired from a vessel berthed near the estuary.

Many regarded the special 'santai di jambatan' programme very memorable as the people can walk, eat, drink and even meet up with the Ruler on the Sultan Ismail Bridge which is always busy with traffics.