



Cruel prank

A total of 75 underprivileged children from Selangor turned up at a complimentary buka puasa feast at a hotel in Johor Baru, only to find out that it was a prank.



Colourful choices: Guests of all races helping themselves to the wide variety of cookies available at the Hari Raya open house at the Johor palace. — Photo by LIM CHENG KIAT

Royal raya do

People from all walks of life throng Istana Pasir Pelangi to indulge in a wide variety of traditional dishes and to catch a glimpse of the Johor royal family.

Royal family treat

Huge line-up for wide spread of local dishes at Istana Pasir Pelangi

By **KATHLEEN ANN KILI**
kili@thestar.com.my
By **LIM CHENG KIAT**



JOHOR BARU: Thousands thronged the Istana Pasir Pelangi here not only to indulge in a wide range of traditional Malay food as well as fast food but also to catch a glimpse of the Johor royal family.

People from all walks of life were seen making beelines at the food and drink stalls set up before they indulged in popular local dishes such as *lemang*, *ketupat*, fried mee, *cendol* as well as fast food catered from Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Opening up his home for his subjects, Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar and his family were also seen dining at a specially set up tent during the open house at the palace here.

Operator Chia Lai Seng, 27, described the event as joyful and fun as people of all backgrounds came together to celebrate the festivities.

"It is my first time joining in the Raya open house celebrations at the palace and it was nice to see the royal family mingling with common people like us," he said when met here last Tuesday.

College student S. Sri Vaishnavi, 21, said that the event was something not to be missed yearly, as she and her family had been visiting the place during Raya since she



1

was a young girl. "I usually come with my parents and siblings, but unfortunately this year, my parents could not make it," she said adding that it was always nice when the Royal family goes around to mingle with the people.

Housewife Junina Dolmat, 32, who came with her family from Pasir Gudang, said that she was amazed at the variety of food served and how welcoming the Johor Royal family, as some of the people went to greet them.

"We are truly blessed to be Johoreans and I cannot wait to come back next year," she said adding that she also managed to make some new friends while queuing for the food.

The Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Mohamed Khaled Nordin, State Secretary Datuk Ismail Karim, state executive councillors and other prominent figures in the state also showed up at the event.

Johor royal consort Raja Zarith Sofiah Sultan Idris Shah and their children Tunku Mahkota Johor Tunku Ismail, Tunku Temenggong Tunku Idris, Tunku Aminah, Tunku Abdul Jalil and Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tunku Abu Bakar also graced the event with their presence.



2

2 Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar meeting and greeting some of the guests.

— Photos by LIM CHENG KIAT

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Cruel prank leaves underprivileged kids in tears at hotel doorstep

By **YEE XIANG YUN**
xiangyun@thestar.com.my

JOHOR BARU: A joyous trip for 75 underprivileged children from Selangor to a complimentary *buka puasa* feast and a night's stay at a hotel here turned sour when they found out that no such invitation was made.

When they arrived at the hotel, the children were reduced to tears while their eight caretakers were left shocked when they were told by front office employees that no such invitation was extended by the hotel.

The children, between two and 18, and their caretakers came all the way from the Surau Silaturrahim home in Gombak and arrived at the Berjaya

Waterfront Hotel in two buses on Wednesday.

Surau Silaturrahim caretaker Normala Baharim, 27, said a man named Faiz had called her and introduced himself as an assistant to the hotel's public relations department.

"When he made the offer, we were happy because the children could have a fun trip and a stay at the hotel. He also promised to reimburse our travel expenses," she said yesterday.

"When we arrived at the hotel, we called Faiz, but his phone could not be reached at all.

"I am shocked over this prank and that he took us for a ride, and I feel bad for the kids because they were so excited during the journey," she said, adding that a

police report has been lodged.

Berjaya Waterfront Hotel marketing and communications senior manager Elaine Tan confirmed that no such employee by that name worked in the hotel's public relations department.

"It was sad for all of us at the hotel to see the kids crying. So, our general manager decided to host the group to a free *buka puasa* dinner.

"We also arranged to have 30 hotel rooms for them to stay in for the night. We also provided them with *sahur* meals later," she added.

Johor Baru South OCPD Asst Comm Sulaiman Salleh said the case was being investigated under Section 420 of the Penal Code for cheating.



Disappointed: The children and their caretakers were left in a lurch at the entrance of the hotel.