

1 Malaysia festive celebration brings cheer

By Naveen Mathew Menon
streets@nstp.com.my
2011/02/11

KUALA LUMPUR: Hands shot up in the air, waving frantically to answer general knowledge quiz questions at a 1Malaysia Celebration tea party for underprivileged children from charity homes recently.

The children were clearly having fun vying to answer questions such as "Who is the prime minister of Malaysia?".

They were more enthusiastic than usual about their studies as they were not cooped up in a classroom and had the opportunity to win prizes.

Aspen Holidays Group Of Companies, in collaboration with Tan Sri Tan Chin Tuan Foundation, wanted the children to feel a sense of belonging regardless of race and religion while learning the value of unity.

As Deepavali, Hari Raya Haji and Christmas came around in the year end, Aspen decided to create a fun-filled, festive atmosphere at Hannah Restaurant in Taman Dagang, Ampang.

More than a hundred children arrived in luxury air-conditioned buses.

The fun started with a Deepavali and pre-Christmas cake-cutting ceremony. The gooey, chocolate cake was snapped up by eager mouths.

Aspen's idea of tea was more like a sumptuous dinner and the kids feasted on a wide selection of Mediterranean and Western food.

While they tucked into delicious food, clowns sculpted balloons in all kinds of shapes and sizes for them.

A clown who doubled up as a ventriloquist arrived with his sidekick, a witty puppet, to mingle with the young guests.

Children from the Beth Shalom Home performed You Raise Me Up and Pujilah Tuhan. The children sing with their foster mother at karaoke sessions at the home daily.

The audience was prompted to join in and with the help of song sheets which were passed around, everyone sang along.

Lete Dharan, the foster mother of children from Orang Asli or indigenous families aged 7 to 15, said: "The children come from four villages -- Kampung Simpang Pertang, Kampung Belihoi, Kampung Pantai and Kampung Jeram Kedah.

"These children have families but I take care of them while they study in various schools in the city.

"They return home to their families during school holidays. The children and I practise singing every day at the home and they also attend some creative music classes," she said.

Aspen Holidays managing director Victor Lim was happy that they could bring festive cheer to less fortunate children.

"These children need something like this to cheer them up and we at Aspen wanted to bring happiness and smiles to their faces.

"We hope to organise more such events and projects to help the less fortunate," said Lim.

Tan Sri Tan Chin Tuan Foundation project consultant Doreen Wan said: "We have children from Rumah Nur Salam, Rumah Charis, Beth Shalom Home and Yayasan Sunbeam.

"We are thankful to have received so much from the community and we are giving some back.

"We have to nurture the children as they are the future of our country. We have to show them that they are loved.

"We are blessed to have our loved ones around us. Some of these children are orphans, some are abused, others are from broken homes and all of them need a lot of love. We have to see to it that they are not left behind in society."

The children were presented with brand new school bags, school uniforms, sun caps, and stationery sets including colour pencils and notebooks by Aspen.

X-9 Communications took on the task of coordinating the 1 Malaysia Celebration as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives.



Victor Lim (4th from left) and Doreen Wan (2nd from right) lead in the 1 Malaysia cake-cutting ceremony – Pictures by C.C. Yong.



The audience sing and dance along to the acoustic guitars, accompanied by Lete Dharan (left) who is in charge of Beth Shalom Home.



Children are treated to a feast of Western and Mediterranean fare.