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## 'Raya open house speaks volumes of HM as leader'



Timothy Lynch (2nd R) and his wife, Effie Polatos (2nd L), pose for a photo with their children at Istana Nurul Iman

WAQIUDDIN RAJAK  
BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN

Tuesday, July 21, 2015

FIRST-TIME foreign visitors were in awe with Istana Nurul Iman as His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam opened his doors to celebrate Aidil Fitri with the public.

Timothy Lynch, an Australian senior lecturer at Monash University, said he was impressed with how the monarch was able to meet the public and offer food to any visitor at the palace.

"Being able to do such speaks volume about his disposition towards being a leader and a king," he said.

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"To me, this is quite a unique situation in Brunei because in other countries, they may only be able to do that or perhaps, will only select a number of people to visit the palace," he added on the first day when the palace was open to the public.

Lynch was transiting in the country with his wife, Effie Pollatos, and his three children before heading home after visiting his in-laws in the United Kingdom.

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"Both me and my wife knew some people who toured here (Brunei) a few years ago and they told us how lovely the country is, so this is why we were eager to visit," he said.

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"My wife also knew that during the (Hari Raya season), people would be able to see the monarch," he added.

Lynch had planned to line up and greet the royal family, but had to miss out to take care of their children aged three, two and nine months.

"All the more, we also have to catch on our bus, so we will only be sitting here enjoying the mood and the food; and it is still quite a great experience for us.

"We would also like to wish the royal family especially the Sultan a "Selamat Hari Raya Aidil Fitri, Maaf Zahir dan Batin," he added.

Ma Rosali Cielo from the Philippines also said she was impressed with how the Istana open house was carried out smoothly.

"Being able to open the palace to the public just shows how peaceful the country this, everything is in place and in order.

"Everything is also quite organised and overall, I am having quite a good time here," she added.

Sim Chui Bee, who travelled with her entourage from Miri, said the atmosphere and experience was quite different compared to watching on television.

"The atmosphere here is very lively; the food is nice and fresh; plenty of our friends usually came here for the Hari Raya visit and this is quite a good experience for me actually.

"We plan to join the queue to see the Sultan and other royal family members, and hopefully we will be able to see them," she added.

The Brunei Times

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