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CENTRAL



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Latin American Festival
returns to celebrate rich
heritage with Malaysians. >12

STARMETRO SATURDAY 28 MAY 2016

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16 events



Visitors trying out the exotic food sold during the festival.



1 A traditional Venezuelan dance.

2 Visitors looking at a colourful display of handicrafts at the Peruvian embassy's stall.

3 The Colombian embassy group introducing traditional food and drinks at the festival.

4 Mohd Najib (fifth from right) trying some traditional Latin American food.

— Photos: SHAARI CHEMAT/The Star

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story by
SHALINI
RAVINDRAN

shaliniravindran@thestar.com.my

EXOTIC aromas, flamboyant costumes and evocative music created a carnival-like atmosphere as the 8th Latin American Festival returned to BB Park, Kuala Lumpur, on May 22.

It was organised by the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (Grulac) in Malaysia in collaboration with Plaza Low Yat, Federal Hotels International and nine Latin American embassies namely Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Also supporting the event were the Latin Ladies Association of Malaysia and Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL).

Brazilian tourists Alfonso Rodriguez, 36, and Eva Lopez, 31, said they found out about the festival through their embassy in Malaysia.

Latin Americans put on vibrant show

Annual festival in KL impresses yet again with variety of food, handicraft and performances

"We wanted to experience how the festival would be celebrated, so we decided to swing by. "We are quite impressed by the authentic food and drinks," they said.

Local visitor Carol Lim, 27, said it was a fun experience. "It is my first time here and it is nice to see how elaborate some of the costumes are," she said.

Cuban ambassador Ibete Fernandez said her team served up authentic recipes including Ropa Vieja (shredded beef), Moros y Cristianos (black bean rice) and Papas Reilenas (stuffed potatoes with minced beef). "This is our eighth time joining the event and I am glad to see that every year there are more people turning up. "It is an opportunity for us to showcase the colours of Cuba

to the Malaysian public," she said.

Venezuelan ambassador Manuel A. Guzman Hernandez said each year brought a bigger turnout to the event.

"Every year, all the Latin American embassies produce better performances or try to showcase their culture in a unique way. "It is a chance for not only the Latin American expats to connect, but a way to give the Malaysian

public a taste of the great cultural wealth of Latin Americans," he said.

DBKL executive director (planning) Datuk Mohd Najib Mohd said supporting the event helped to strengthen bilateral relations between Latin American countries and DBKL.

Plaza Low Yat and BB Park general manager Albert Khoo said they estimated 10,000 people to attend the festival this year.

"Bukit Bintang has always been a popular tourist hotspot and is convenient for people to get to. "Hosting the festival here has brought more liveliness and culture to the place," he said.

More than a fiesta to introduce Latin culture, the festival also raised funds for Kitarsh Handicapped and Disabled Children's Home.

This year's event also saw the participation of the Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) to mark the 2016 Olympics, which will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil this August.



A colourful parade of costumes worn by the children of Latin American families in Malaysia during the opening ceremony. Looking on are Mohd Najib (back row, centre), Hernandez (in red) and ambassadors of the nine Latin American countries.



The 8th Latin American Festival saw the participating countries promoting their handicraft, such as these keychains and mugs from Ecuador.