

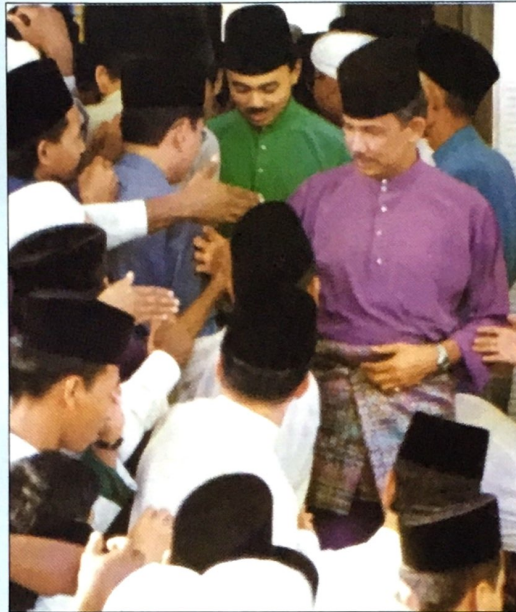
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Front Cover

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah and other members of the royal family were among the thousands of Muslims who performed the Aidilfitri prayer at the Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque. Here, His Majesty and his son, His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah are seen being greeted by some of the people who attended the congregational prayer.

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Inside of front cover

An assortment of *kuih asli* (traditional cakes and cookies), some of which are popular during Ramadan.

Inside of back cover

Children playing with *bunga api* (a type of hand-held fireworks).





A GREAT DAY FOR EVERY MUSLIM

Ask any Muslim what is his or her favourite festival, and the answer is almost certainly *Hari Raya*.

This is because in the calendar of Muslim festivities none is celebrated more joyously throughout the Islamic world as *Hari Raya*, which means great day in English and is called *Aidilfitri* in Arabic. As the name implies it is an occasion observed with zest by Muslims in all walks of life.

Hari Raya occurs on the first day of *Syawal*, which is the tenth month of the Muslim calendar. As the calendar is based on the lunar movement - the day and night worked out on the basis of the moon's rotation around the earth - *Hari Raya* is, therefore, subject to fall in different months of the Gregorian calendar, which is derived from the solar system.

To determine the start of the new month in the Muslim calendar two methods are used namely, the *hisab* (astronomical calculations) and the *rukyah* (sighting of the new moon).

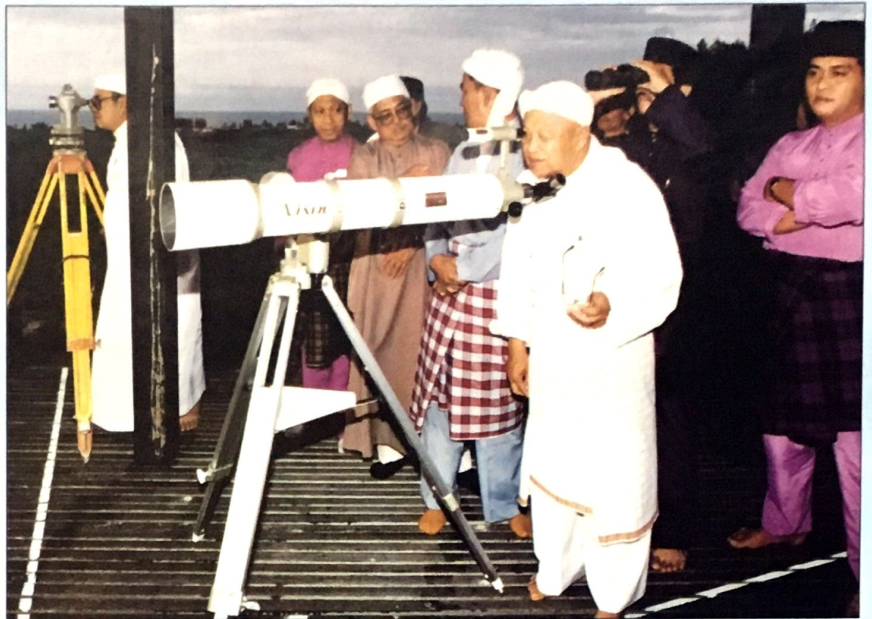
Brunei Darussalam favours the latter because it is

regarded by the country's Muslim scholars as more dependable. Sighting of the new moon is normally made on two very important occasions: to fix the beginning of the *Puasa* (fasting) and, of course, *Hari Raya*.



Relevant government officials carrying out the sighting of the new moon of either *Ramadan* to fix the start of fasting or *Syawal* to ascertain the first day of *Hari Raya*, which is the festival marking the end of the fasting month. This year *Puasa* (fasting) fell on January 22 and *Hari Raya* on March 20.

Every year officials from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Survey Department, using powerful telescopes, position themselves at vantage points in various parts of the country at sundown to catch a glimpse of the new moon of *Syawal*.



If it is sighted, Hari Raya is 'tomorrow'; if not, then it is 'the day after'.

Ramadan

With days of elaborate preparations reaching their climax, the results are eagerly awaited over the radio and on television. In the old days before the advent of either the radio or television, the outcome of the sighting of the moon was conveyed to the faithful by the beating of the *beduk* (large drum made of hide and hollow wooden cylinder) in rapid succession.

The eagerness then was probably just as great as it is today because *Hari Raya* marks the end of *Ramadan*, the fasting month. Hence the anticipation and excitement because *Hari Raya* is really in celebration of the triumph over the month-long fasting during which Muslims,

A water village mosque official shows how to beat the *beduk* using two sticks.



for approximately fourteen hours, have to refrain from eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, and vomiting. Any of these and others including putting anything on purpose into a body hole such as nose, ear and so forth, masturbation and menstruation will result in the fast being invalid.

In addition, they must also shackle their other passions and desires, among other things, including anything to do with sex, smoking, falsehood, gossip, slander, anger, foul talk, quarelling and fighting.

In other words, the person who fasts must exercise absolute patience and be prepared to withstand hunger, thirst, hardship, suffering and temptation in silence as experienced by the 'have-nots'. The 'haves' realise this when they fast and thus feel sympathy in their hearts for the 'have-nots'.

In order not to mar or negate the blessings one hopes to get in *Ramadan*, he or she must be pious in thought, deed, and company at all times throughout his or her fast and waking hours. All these sacrifices are carried out with the single objective of seeking the Almighty's pleasure.

Obligatory

Fasting is one of the five *rukun* (pillars or tenets) of Islam and has been commanded by God in the

Koran through verse 183 of the *Surah Al-Baqarah*, which can be roughly translated as: "*It is obligatory upon you to fast as it was obligatory upon those before you, so that you are God-fearing.*" The other four are profession of belief (the believer bears witness that there is no god but Allah (the God) and that

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah); the maintenance of prayers five times a day; the payment of *zakat* (religious tithes); and the performance of pilgrimage to Mecca for those who are able and have the means.

According to the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), fasting

Muslims performing the voluntary *Terawih* prayer in congregation at the Jame' Asr Hassanil Bolkihah Mosque in Kampong Kiarong.



is a shield that guards the faithful from all kinds of sins. In another *hadith* (tradition) the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) said whoever fasts in *Ramadan* because of faith in Allah and hoping for blessings will surely have his or her sins forgiven. In short, *Ramadan*, as can be seen later, presents the Muslims with unbounded opportunities to purify themselves spiritually.

The fast is *wajib* (obligatory) to every able-bodied and mentally sound Muslim who has reached *akil baligh* (puberty). The only persons that can be excused from the fast during *Ramadan* are the sick, travellers on long journeys and women who are menstruating or have just given birth. But all of these people are obliged, as soon as they are able, to fast

during the other months. As regards a woman who is pregnant or nursing a baby, two rules apply. Firstly, if she worries about herself it is obligatory for her to fast during the other months equivalent to the number of days that she missed in *Ramadan*. On the other hand, if it is her baby she is worried about, then she is obliged to fast after *Ramadan* as well as to



pay a *kifarat* (token penalty) by giving one *cupak* or approximately 0.9 kg of rice to the indigent for each day she did not fast. An aged person who is too weak is exempt from the fast and is only required to give one *cupak* of rice a day to the indigent.

The coming of *Ramadan*, looked upon as the chief of the Muslim months, is greeted with gratitude by devout Muslims because of the many promises of *ganjaran* (Divine rewards) in the hereafter for those who perform, fasting aside, other good deeds throughout the month.

Every good deed or action in Islam must be preceded by *niat* (intention), which must be firmly recited in the heart. In fasting, the best time to do this is before one retires for the night or during *sahur*, the pre-dawn meal. At any rate it has to be uttered well before *imsak*, the time when all activities that can render the fast invalid should come to a halt. This year it was around 4.55 a.m. local time, give or take a few minutes.

The *niat* is vital as it is one of the four pillars of fasting. Needless to say without it the fast loses its religious meaning. The other three are to restrain oneself from drinking/eating, sexual intercourse and vomiting

Although the fast is obligatory, compliance is strictly left to the



conscience of the individual Muslim whether to fast or not since it is between him or her and the Almighty. Nevertheless Muslims in Brunei Darussalam, like those in many other Islamic countries, are always reminded of their individual and collective obligations towards Islam. During *Ramadan*, for example, they are warned that they risk apprehension and fines if they are caught eating, drinking or smoking in public because such act amounts to showing

disrespect for as well as making a mockery of Islam in the eyes of non-Muslims and belittling those Muslims who fast.

Unique

Each day as the time to break the fast draws near, every town in the country is a hive of activities with people hunting for their favourite foods to eat in their first meals of the day. Days before the fasting month commences, the municipal authorities set



A group of Muslims carrying out a **Tedarus** in which they peruse from the Holy Koran in turn and strive to **khatam** (finish) reading the 6,236 verses in 30 chapters of the Sacred Book as many times as possible during **Ramadan**.

practised by the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him).

Later, after the *Maghrib* and *Isyak* prayers — the last two of the five obligatory daily prayers of the day — Muslims perform the nightly *Tarawih* congregational prayer in mosques and *surau* (small mosques). This is followed by the *tedarus* in which Muslims take turns to read the *Koran* and strive to *Khatam* or finish reading the Holy Book as many times as possible before the fasting month ends. *Tarawih* and *tedarus* are two *sunat* (voluntary or optional) good deeds that are practised only in *Ramadan*. Another special feature of the month is *Lailatul Qadr*, the night of the Koran revelation, which the Holy Book describes as a

up special hawker stalls where all sorts of delicacies, many of which not available during the other months, are sold. Those who prefer home-cooking are not disappointed because every housewife seems to be at her culinary best in *Ramadan*, whipping up a variety of dishes to whet the appetites of her family. However, many Muslims prefer to break their fasts with fruits, like dates, as

A **Tedarus** being conducted at the home of one of the country's VIPs.



night better than a thousand months. Although nobody knows when exactly is *Lailatul Qadr*, a tradition of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) indicates that the unique night takes place during the last ten days of *Ramadan*.

Tithe

One more vital obligation the Muslims have to carry out is the payment of *zakat*. There are two kinds of *zakat* in Islam: *zakat harta* (wealth or property tithe) and *zakat fitrah* (personal tithe).

Since the days of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), *zakat* has been the mainstay of the Islamic economic system. The prime purpose of its decree is to provide the Muslim community with an economic assurance and to hinder the unscrupulous few from amassing wealth at the expense of the less fortunate.

The *zakat* system acts as a constant reminder to the rich to share their wealth with the poor or needy as an expression of gratitude for Allah's blessings and bounty. Thus the system teaches the rich to have social responsibility; rids them of greed, stinginess and selfishness; and strengthen Muslim fraternity.

In *Ramadan*, Muslims are concerned mainly with the *zakat fitrah*, which must be settled at the latest before the start of the *Hari Raya*



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Every year just before the beginning of **Ramadan**, the authorities build temporary stalls where hawkers prepare foods of all sorts for their customers to break their fast with, such as grilled chicken and fish.

Curries, vegetables and sweetmeats.

Some housewives prefer to buy their cookies from youth associations that make and sell them a few days before the big day.

A variety of other local delicacies including prawns (*pais Udang*), mussels (*pais kupang*) and pilchards (*pais tamban*), which are all wrapped and grilled in young coconut leaves.

a hundred *amil* (tithe collectors), who accept the payments in mosques and their own homes and issue receipts for them.

The significance of the *zakat fitrah* is that its payment spiritually cleanses the individual Muslim from all the minor wrongdoings he or she might have committed while fasting and at the same time the accumulated sums enable those who have the right to receive them to join in the *Hari Raya* celebrations like everyone else.

As stipulated by Islam there are eight *asnaf* (categories of persons), who are entitled to be given the

congregational prayer on the morning of the first day of *Syawal*.

The *zakat fitrah* is obligatory on every Muslim who has in his possession more than enough staple food for himself and his dependents on *Hari Raya*. The head of the family pays not only for himself but also for everyone else who is dependent on him for his or her livelihood.

Asnaf

This year the *zakat fitrah* payment amounted to just under two dollars per head in Brunei Darussalam. The sum was worked out as the equivalent value of about 2.3 kg of the country's staple food, which, in the case of Brunei Darussalam, is rice.

Each year the religious authorities appoint more than

tithe collections namely: paupers, destitutes, tithe collectors, needy Islamic converts, slaves who seek their own release by instalments (no longer applicable), those who are heavily in debt for a noble cause, those who fight for a religious cause, and those on long journeys.

Muslims are also encouraged to practise *sedekah* (alms-giving) during the fasting month. Although *sedekah* is voluntary as a religious requirement, it is looked upon as a meritorious act provided that, like any other good deed in Islam, it is done not for personal glory but for the seeking of Divine pleasure only.

Those in the vicinity of the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, settle their tithes at one of the country's famous landmarks, the Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque.



Muslims paying their tithes to the appointed collectors at the Jame' Asr Hassanil Bolkhiah.



Shopping

As the fasting progresses into its second week preparations for *Hari Raya* get under way. The festive atmosphere becomes more evident day by day as Muslims begin to beautify their homes and embark on a once-a-year shopping-spree. They purchase practically everything that will make the all-important day a new experience.

The shopping list is likely to include house decorations; curtains; dresses; even furniture for some; soft drinks; and ingredients for making traditional foods, cakes, cookies and other goodies.

For those - and there are many - who prefer to have their curtains and dresses tailor-made normally place their orders several weeks before *Ramadan* so that they can have them ready for *Hari Raya*.

As in the past, dresses remain uppermost in everyone's catalogue of priorities. Traditional attire, *Baju Kurung* and *Baju Cara Melayu* for the ladies and men respectively, are

As *Hari Raya* draws near every town in the country gets busier than ever as people start doing their shopping. The picture shows a senior citizen couple making their choices from stacks of soft drinks, which overflow a shop. Soft drinks of various flavours are among the items which people buy most for *Hari Raya*.

A young couple trying a *songkok* (Malay hat) on their son.

A mother making sure a dress fits her daughter.





Hari Raya greeting cards, which people send to their relatives and friends inside as well as outside the country at least two weeks before the end of *Ramadan*, are another group of things which people buy a lot.



Artificial flowers are among the home decorations that are a must during *Hari Raya*. Here an enterprising young lady is seen assembling the many flower parts available in shops around the country to look like the real thing.



New window curtains are part of the idea of looking best for *Hari Raya* as being done by this housewife.

still what most Muslim elect to wear during the festive season. These dresses and other Malay-type apparel like the *Kurung Fesyen* and the *Kebaya Fesyen* (innovations of the traditional *Baju Kurung* and *Baju Kebaya*), a favourite with younger women, have always been custom-made.

Parents who have already upgraded their wardrobes weeks earlier are now busy buying things for their children from the bigger stores, which have on offer a wide selection of ready-made clothing, shoes, and *songkok* (cap worn by the Malay male).

Bercukul

Colourful lights are among the home decorations that are a must in the *Hari Raya* celebrations. There are two kinds of them: the big bulb coloured lights, which are hung on the exterior of the house or along the driveway; and the small decorative lights of the blinking type which some homeowners like to install inside as well as outside their houses.

This is known as *bercukul* (lighting up), which has been an integral part of the *Hari Raya* celebrations in Brunei Darussalam since time immemorial.

In former times, before electricity was introduced in the country, *bercukul* consisted of small oil-lamps or candles placed on top of wooden or bamboo posts that were erected in rows on either



Bercucul or lighting up has always been a component of **Hari Raya** so much so that before the introduction of electricity it was done with oil lamps or candles.

Ketupat (rice dumpling) cases, which are available at the *tamu* or open-air markets, sell more during the festive season than at any other time.
(inset) A women weaving a **ketupat** case.





Making **lemang**, a traditional food like the *ketupat* but made of glutinous rice and coconut milk and cooked in bamboo leaves and stems.

side of the path leading to the front of the house. It was fun all round, particularly for the children, except when it was windy or raining.

A couple of days before *Hari Raya* most housewives start shopping for ingredients such as, among other things, meat, chicken, vegetables, coconuts and spices for cooking traditional food like *rendang* (a dish of meat cooked with coconut milk and spices until dry); *ayam kurma* (a dish of chicken cooked until coconut milk and spices become thick, rich gravy); and *satay* (small chunks of meat cooked in peanut sauce or skewered with ribs of coconut leaves

and cooked over charcoal fire). Some housewives may also be busy weaving *ketupat* (traditional rice dumpling) casings from *pucuk* (young leaves) of the coconut palm or the *nipah*, a species of palm growing along the country's river banks. The casings are available at the *tamu* (open market) for those who have no time or the skill to weave them. Cooking the foods and boiling the *ketupat* take place on the eve of *Hari Raya* or very early on the morning of the great day itself.

Takbir

The fasts are maintained for 29 or 30 days and the sighting of the new moon

of *Syawal* is carried out on the evening of the 29th day. The announcement of the result of the sighting comes around 7.30. If the moon is seen, *Hari Raya* is the 'next day'; if not, then it is the 'day after tomorrow'.

On *Hari Raya* eve the *takbir* (religious verses in praise of Allah) is recited in chorus over the radio, on television and in mosques and *surau* throughout the State, heightening further the festive mood. It also brings back memories of those who will not be around this time to share the joy of *Hari Raya*.

While welcoming *Aidifitri*, Muslims who understand the essence of *Ramadan* feel a certain sadness at its departure and look forward to its coming again next year to enable them to enhance their good deeds and thus advance to a higher moral and spiritual level that will bring them ever closer to the Creator.

Buoyed by the expectation of 'tomorrow', housewives and other members of the households get very little or no sleep at all 'tonight' as they set about making everything ready, including giving final touches to the decorations.



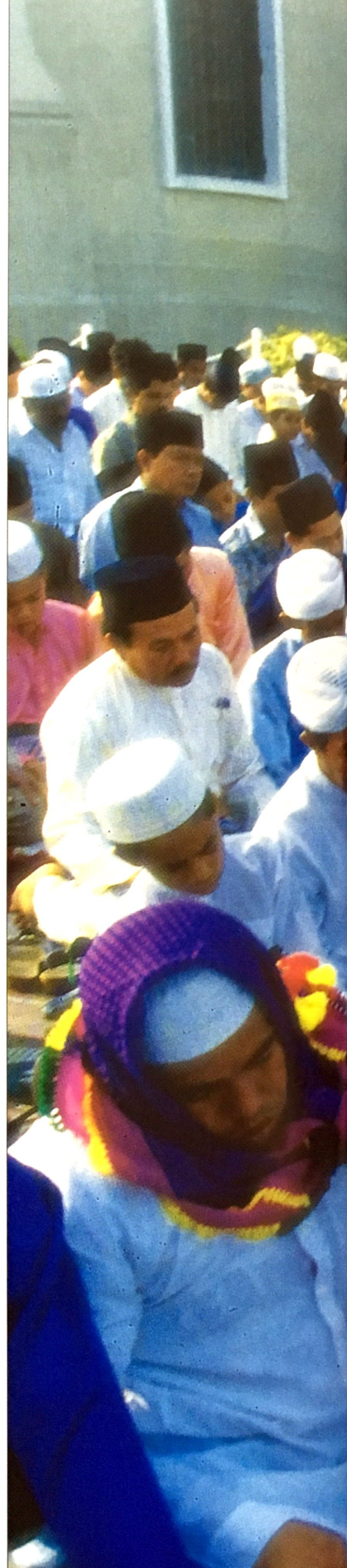
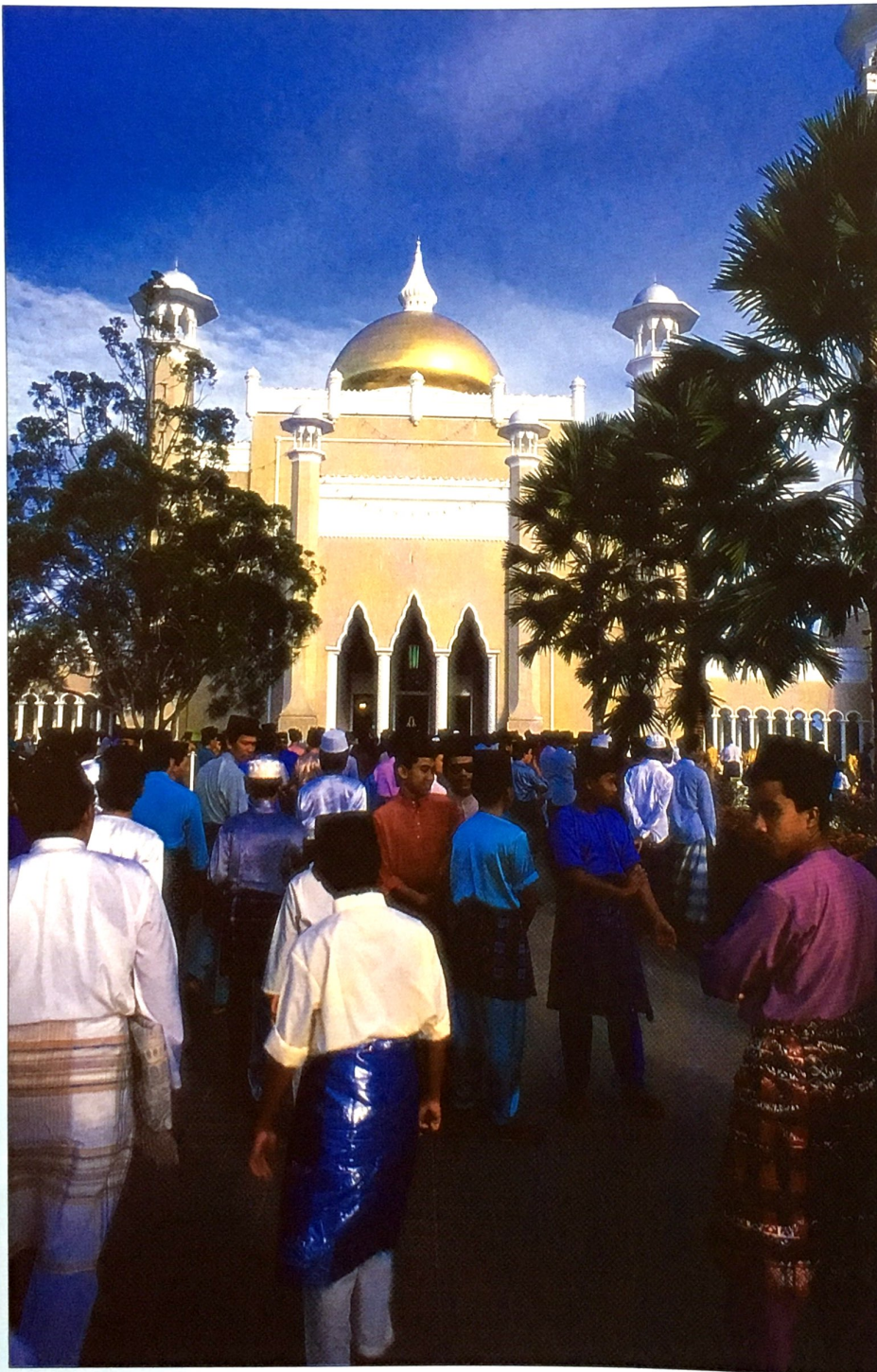
Worshippers listening to the **Aidilfitri** sermon delivered by the imam of the **Aidilfitri** prayer (standing on the podium) of the Jame' Asr Hassanal Bolkiah Mosque.

On the morning of the first day of **Hari Raya** every mosque and *surau* (prayer hall) are full with Muslim men and women participating in the congregational **Aidilfitri** prayer. The picture shows the women congregation before the prayer at the Jame' Asr Hassanal Bolkiah Mosque.



Some kilometres away, right in the heart of the capital, Muslims turn up in droves at the Omar Ali Saifuddien (OAS) Mosque (below).

Muslims at prayer outside the OAS Mosque, which was as usual full to capacity (right).





Bermaaf-maafan

Every family naturally wants to look its best during Hari Raya, which is dictated by custom to last not one day but many days, because it is customary for relatives and friends to visit one another to swap greetings and at the same time to take the opportunity to *bermaaf-maafan* (exchange words of forgiveness) for past misdeeds.

The *takbir* is again recited in the same manner on *Hari Raya* morning after the *Subuh* (dawn) prayer until about 7.30 when Muslims, overflowing every mosque and *surau*, commence the voluntary congregational *Aidilfitri* prayer.

After the worship, Muslims as a rule return to their respective homes and do the

Muslim helping themselves to a *Hari Raya* feast.





bermaaf-maafan with the immediate members of their households before most of them probably tuck into traditional breakfast of *ketupat* and other delicacies.

A typical scene during ***Hari Raya*** when people visit each other and do the ***bermaaf-maafan*** (asking for forgiveness for past misdeeds).

But there are others who will head straight for the

cemetery as it has become the custom for family members to visit the graves of their loved ones and to pray for their souls during the festive seasons.



Starting on the second day of **Hari Raya**, the Istana (Palace) Nurul Iman is open to the public for three days to enable the people to wish the royal family **Selamat** (Happy) **Hari Raya**. The picture shows His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah; his son, His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah; His Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Perdana Wazir Sahibul Himmah Wal-Waqar Pengiran Muda Mohamed Bolkiah; His Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Bendahara Seri Maharaja Permaisua Pengiran Muda Haji Sufri Bolkiah; and other members of the royal family, receiving the streams of visitors.

In this picture His Majesty the Sultan is seen with His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah; His Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Perdana Wazir Sahibul Himmah Wal-Waqar Pengiran Muda Mohamed Bolkiah; and His Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Digadong Sahibul Mal Pengiran Muda Haji Jefri Bolkiah, the Finance Minister; as well as other members of the royal family.



Women well-wishers being received by Her Majesty Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Hajah Saleha, Her Royal Highness Pengiran Isteri Hajah Mariam and other members of the royal family.

Just a small portion of the tens of thousands of the visitors registering themselves before joining the long queues to wish the royal family ***Selamat Hari Raya***.





Visitors helping themselves to a variety of culinary delights at the Istana Nurul Iman before meeting the royal family.



After the feast the visitors make their way to join the long queues.



His Majesty the Sultan, members of his family, and State dignitaries offering prayers at the Royal Mausoleum.



Cleaning the graveyards is regarded as a good deed, especially during the fasting month.



A touching sight during *Hari Raya* when Muslims visit graveyards to offer prayers for the souls of their loved ones.

Although going to the graveyard can be done at any time and is encouraged as a voluntary good deed to remind one that death comes to all living things, visiting it on the great day is also a way of showing that the departed are not forgotten and that their memories always have a special place in the heart of every Bruneian during *Hari Raya*.

