

Chong wows the crowd with 'dikir barat' skills

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SEREMBAN: The crowd had an unexpected treat when Deputy Education Minister Datuk Chong Sin Woon joined a group of primary school pupils in a *dikir barat* performance.

Sitting cross-legged on the stage, he was one of the *awok-awok* (chorus members) in the troupe performing three numbers.

Chong's dexterity in the performance won him and the children from SK Seremban 2B a rousing applause.

"I saw the pupils performing *dikir barat* when I visited them some time ago.

"Since I had a liking for *dikir barat*, I returned and asked to practise with the boys.

"I also recorded the session so I could watch it during my free time," he said.

Chong caught the crowd by surprise as he was the guest of honour for the launch of the school's community project at Seremban Prima

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shopping complex here.

Aimed at promoting a healthy lifestyle and encouraging students to hone their leadership and oratory skills, the event saw pupils and students from different schools staging arts and cultural shows.

Chong, who donned a *tengkolok* (traditional Malay headgear) during the performance, said he was first introduced to *dikir barat* as a Form Six student.

He was roped in by his schoolmates to join a *dikir barat* troupe for a performance at Universiti Putra Malaysia.

"After a few practice sessions, I grew fond of the art and eventually fell in love with it," he said.

Speaking from his own experience, Chong said Malaysians should take pride in the fact that they could indulge in the culture of other races, and by doing so, appreciate each other more.



Surprise guest: Chong performing with pupils from SK Seremban 2B after launching the Seremban Prima School Community Project.

"There is nothing wrong about wanting to learn about one another," he said.

"We should not entertain extreme views but learn to embrace our differences."

Earlier, Chong commended the

management of Seremban Prima for hosting the event with SMK Dato Haji Mohd Redza.

"It is good to give our young children a platform to perform in public as this is a good training ground," he said.

"By participating in such activities, they can enhance their leadership skills and gain more confidence."

Also present was Seremban Prima marketing and communications manager Noor Fadzli Shah.