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HOTEL FETES CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Hotel Equatorial Penang feted a sumptuous buffet at its new all-day dining Nada Lama for 28 disadvantaged children, some of whom have special needs, and 10 teachers from Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Gudang Rasau, Pahang recently. The hotel's management team led by general manager Tan Lay Hong were at hand to welcome the group who were on the island for a 3 day/2 night visit.

Teacher Mohd Rizam bin Salak who has been teaching in the school for the past 8 years said the outing formed part of the school's annual curriculum activities to help the special and disadvantaged students broaden their horizon while improving their social skills at the same time. The school's outdoor programme also includes horse-riding, bowling, swimming, shopping and field trips.

The trip to Penang took the children to Penang Hill, Fort Cornwallis, Batu Feringgi, the heritage city of Georgetown and a ride on the Penang Ferry. "For many of the children

this would mark the first time they are stepping out of their home state and needless to say they were excited and posed a lot of questions. Being children, their trip up to Penang Hill by rail caused the most buzz," Rizam said.

Slow learner and orphans 18-year old Mohd Azwan bin Osman and his twin brother Mohd Azlan bin Osman conveyed that they were very blessed to have been able to participate in the trip and highlighted they were taken in by the Penang Bridge. Fondly referred to as Upin and Ipin by their school mates and teachers, the two who are noted to be especially caring to the younger children, were seen happily tucking into the desserts at the hotel's buffet spread.

Grilled prawns, pizza and Penang Laksa were the favourites of 13-year old Nity Nathan who aspires to become a football player. His trip to the buffet counter also included several helpings of ice-kacang with dollops of ice-cream. Nity said he would be more than happy if the annual excursion plans for 2015 brought him back to Penang again. He hoped it would coincide with the durian season where a ride up the scenic Balik Pulau Hill would be most likely.

Tan said the look of joy on the faces of the children as they indulged in the buffet was heartwarming. She added that the hotel organizes a yearly charity event to raise funds for disadvantaged children, and the charity events have ranged from sale of festive goodies to donating an amount for every like the hotel received on its Facebook fan page over a selected time period.

Mohd Rizam said that 2014 marked the last year in school for some of the special students. He added that the school's next step is to match their students to jobs which would best resonate with their interest and passion. "Having a job will help boost their self-esteem, foster some measure of independence and opportunity for them to positively contribute to society," he continued.

Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Gudang Rasau which was built in 2002 has some 500 students of which 45 require special education.

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About Nada Lama

The new all-day dining Nada Lama which translates to 'Yesterday's Melody' is a tribute to Penang's colourful past, and borrows inspiration from its colonial and Peranakan ancestry. It is a space with fragments of heritage metamorphosed to the present day – not traditional, but with a timeless chic heritage mood.

The concept of Nada Lama takes on traditional detailing borrowed from architecture, clothing and bold color injection that is inspired by the Peranakan 'kuih' and pottery. Nada Lama was envisaged to be a space reminiscent of a Nyonya household, taking one on a sensory journey that encapsulates all five senses.

Nada Lama is open daily from 6.00am to 1.00am and serves buffet breakfast, lunch and dinner. A la carte menus are also available.

About Hotel Equatorial Penang

Perched 250 feet above sea-level, the 662-room Hotel Equatorial Penang is conveniently located minutes from the Penang International Airport, the Penang Free Trade Zone, the two Penang bridges and the heritage city of Georgetown.

The hotel has five restaurants and bars which offer international and local fare, 2 column-free ballrooms that are supported by 23 function rooms. Leisure options include the 50 meter outdoor swimming pool, a fully equipped gymnasium and complimentary shuttle service to shopping malls, the city centre and Batu Feringgi beach.