SINGAPORE: It was a perfect day for a walk in the park, and a record number of more than 26,000 Singaporeans and foreigners spent the last day of the Lunar New Year holidays at the Istana, which held an Open House on Tuesday.

For many, it was their first trip to the Istana and they relished it, especially those who got to meet President S R Nathan.

One person said, "For the past few years, I wanted to come here but (didn't get the chance), but suddenly my husband said at 12pm, 'come let's go the Istana because it is Open House'. I was very happy, I said ok, (let's) go."

Another family commented, "We were lucky to have taken photographs with him. He was very happy that we took the time to come and visit the Istana."

The President and Mrs Nathan also made their way to the Istana gate to welcome the visitors.

President Nathan said, "More than 26,000 came here. Normally it is in the range of 15,000 or 16,000. Maybe (because it is) the long holiday, the good weather today, the mood that everything is hopeful...all this must have contributed to people wanting to come."

On his wish for the Lunar New Year, President Nathan said, "It's our wish that this current year will be as prosperous as the previous, and that people will be endowed with good health and that they will find contentment in whatever they do."

The Open House celebrations also included several street and band performances. - CNA/ms