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Istana Open House to be held on Deepavali, Oct 22

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SINGAPORE - The Istana grounds will be open to the public on Wednesday, Oct 22, from 8.30am to 6pm, in celebration of Deepavali.

Visitors can look forward to family activities like animal displays and instant portraits, as well as performances by volunteer arts groups and for the first time, the National University of Singapore's Indian Dance Group and the Singapore Management University's Samba Masala. Students from Tampines Secondary and Siglap Secondary schools will also be putting up band performances.

Members of the public can also sign up for the guided nature walks at the Istana, or take guided heritage tours of the Istana main building. They can view some function rooms like the state room, banquet hall and reception room, and gifts presented by foreign dignitaries.

Entry to the Istana is free for Singaporeans and Singapore permanent residents. Other visitors are required to pay an entrance fee of \$1 per person.

A statement released on Monday by the President's Office said that scheduled programmes may be shortened or suspended if the air quality drops to "unhealthy" or "very unhealthy" levels, according to the National Environment Agency's guidelines.

The Istana Open House will be cancelled if air quality is at the "hazardous" level, it added. More information on the status of the event will be on the Istana's website - www.istana.gov.sg