

# 2,500 join in Bon dance at Japanese Culture Night

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KOTA KINABALU: The Bon Odori or Bon dance got some 2,500 visitors dancing in motion for about 35 minutes following the rhythm of Japanese music and beat of the 'Taiko' drum, a type of a Japanese percussion instrument, at the UMS Chancellor Hall on Saturday evening.

The dance is part of the Japanese Culture Night organised by the UMS Japanese Culture Club to appreciate the country's culture and entertainment.

"We did this because we wanted to introduce Japanese culture to the public. I love Japanese movies, drama, music and manga (Japanese comic)," said Ang, a 22-year-old lass from Perak.

And according to Ang, she was attracted to the Japanese because of their politeness.

"They are well-mannered and if we are close to them (Japanese) it is



Visitors dance circling the stage or called the Bon Odori during the Japanese Culture night.

highly we will become polite too," she said.

Ang is also the club's secretary and third year forestry student,

"The Bon Odori dance here has already been modernised. It is a combination of modern and some research from youtube. The dancers are from the UMS Art School," said Soo Pui Ching, 22, the backstage manager.

Bon Odori or Bon Dance is a folk dance to welcome the spirits of the dead, is part of the activities done during the Bon Festival.

The Bon Festival is a 500-year-old traditional Japanese Buddhist custom to honor the spirits of one's ancestors normally, held in July 15, August 15 and October.

The festival has since evolved into a family reunion holiday in some parts of Japan.

Bon Festival is also celebrated outside of Japan in countries like Argentina, Brazil and China. It is equivalent to the Chinese's Hungry Ghost Festival.

While In Malaysia, the Bon Odori festivals are celebrated in

Penang and Shah Alam, Selangor.

Among other highlights during the Bon Odori event was Karate display by the State Sukma Team, Japanese Aikido from the UMS Aikido Club, Shorinji Kempo and a Yusakoi Dance performance by the UMS Art School as well as modern Japanese dance performances.

Stalls were also opened during the event selling Japanese food and drinks, including an exhibition booth explaining the history of Bon Festivals, Japanese handicrafts and traditional costumes.