

People's dinner for Mahathir a grand success

NSMNT 4 AUG 1985

PENANG, Sat. — The 15,000-guests Malam Rakyat dinner in honour of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last night was a resounding success right from the word go.

Although the mammoth dinner at the Padang Kota Lama was to start at 8.40pm, diners started streaming in from as early as 7pm to locate their tables in a maze of 1,500 tables which occupied the whole field.

Some diners parked their cars about one kilometre from the field to avoid congestion after the dinner.

Those who entered from the Jalan Padang Kota side had a glimpse of the Proton Saga which was displayed on a stage beside the main table.

With the flick of a switch, the hundreds of fluorescent lamps fastened onto wooden posts transformed the entire field into fairytale land of glittering and sparkling lights never seen before in the State.

Even the 65-storey Komtar, the tallest building in the country, was lit specially for the occasion and provided a majestic backdrop.

By the time Dr Mahathir and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah arrived, escorted by a motorcade of 200 outriders from Umno, Gerkaan, MCA and MIC, all seats had been taken up.

The couple was welcomed by Chief Minister Dr Lim Chong Eu, Malam Rakyat dinner organising chairman Datuk Khor Gark Kim and other State dignitaries.

They were then greeted in succession by kompong groups, Eurasian singers, Indian dancers and lion dancers.

The crowd gave a rousing applause as Dr Mahathir and his wife stepped into the padang and proceeded to the main table.

The dinner began at 8.40 and was punctuated with brief stoppages when Datuk Khor, Dr Lim and Dr Mahathir gave their speeches.

The Penang Symphony Orchestra provided musical interludes during the dinner and demonstrated their versatility by playing Malay, Chinese and Western tunes.

Dr Mahathir said he was impressed with the tremendous response and the organisation of the dinner.

Dr Lim said more people had wanted to attend the dinner but could not be accommodated because of space constraints.

After the dinner, the Prime Minister and his wife were presented with oil portraits of themselves by heads of the various chambers of commerce in Penang which commissioned artist Ho Khay Beng to paint them.