

29/04/1998

King launches Ma'al Hijrah celebrations

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Ma'al Hijrah, marking the new Islamic calendar year of 1419, was celebrated on a moderate scale throughout the country today.

The national-level celebrations themed "Country's Well-being, Our Responsibility" was launched by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar at Pusat Islam.

It was attended by over 1,300 Muslims. Present were Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali.

They were joined by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman, Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed.

There was no presentation of the national Tokoh Ma'al Hijrah award this year.

In Alor Star, Ma'al Hijrah was celebrated on a moderate scale from last night with about 1,000 people joining the Sultan and other members of the State Government in a yassin recital at Masjid Zahir.

Supplicatory prayers (sembahyang hajat) for rain were also held after the recital.

This morning, a special gathering of students, youth clubs and association members was held at Wisma Darul Aman to honour the Tokoh Ma'al Hijrah Kedah - State Fatwa Committee chairman Datuk Paduka Sheikh Abdul Majid Mohd Noor.

Sheikh Abdul Majid, a teacher and administrator, who won the Tokoh Guru title in 1987, was presented the award by the Sultan.

Earlier, in his address, the Sultan urged Muslims not to be discouraged by the current economic problems but to continue working hard to help the country achieve a speedy recovery.

In Malacca, Muslims in the State were urged to continue paying tithes and not to use the present economic problems as a excuse for not doing so.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin said tithe payments would assist the less fortunate.

Former State mufti, Datuk Sheikh Mohamad Yunus Mohamad Yatim, 69, was chosen for this year's Tokoh Ma'al Hijrah award.

Sheikh Mohamad Yunus, who was a mufti from Aug 16, 1979 till retirement in April 1996, was recognised for his contribution to Muslims and Islam.

In Kota Kinablu, 3,000 Muslims joined the celebrations opened by Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Sakaran Dandai.

In his speech, Ma'al Hijrah 1419 organising committee chairman Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia said the Muslim community should not panic when facing the economic problems and the prolonged drought.

They should instead be patient and assist the Government in seeking solutions.

Meanwhile, Sakaran said the people should continue to stay united in the wake of economic problems facing the country.

Sakaran urged the people to live a simple life and to exercise prudence.

In Ipoh, Sultan of Perak Sultan Azlan Shah urged Muslims to accept the current economic problem in their stride and treat it as a lesson.

"The best way will be to evaluate and revise all the strategies and plans we have undertaken so far so that the situation does not deteriorate," he said.

Religious teacher Mohamed Hisham Anang, 71 of Bagan Datoh, Hilir Perak,

was named the State Tokoh Ma'al Hijrah this year.

He received RM3,000, a certificate of merit and other prizes from the Sultan.

In Terengganu, about 1,500 gathered at the Kolej Agama Sultan Zainal Abidin to mark the occasion.

The Sultan of Terengganu presented the Tokoh Ma'al Hijrah award to former religious teacher Endut Yusuf, 73, of Kampung Seberang Bukit Tumbuh, Kuala Terengganu.

He advised the people to exercise prudence when spending and urged the youths to stay away from unhealthy activities.

In Penang, the State award for Outstanding Muslim of the Year went to Shafien Md Zain, the principal of the Sekolah Menengah Maahad Al-Mashor Al-Islami in Sungai Batu, Teluk Kumbar.

The Masjid Jamek Al-Badawi of Kepala Batas from the Seberang Perai northern district of Butterworth was judged the State's "Best Mosque of the Year".

The prizes were presented by Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Dr Hamdan Sheikh Tahir.

In Seremban, former teacher Ali Musa, 75, was named the State-level Tokoh Ma'al Hijrah while Samsung Electronics Group Malaysia received the Quality Award.

Ali received RM2,000 from the State Islamic Religious Council, a robe, a certificate of appreciation and religious books worth RM1,000 while Samsung received a trophy and a certificate of appreciation.

In Johor Baru, the Sultan of Johor led a congregation of about 2,000 Muslims for the surah yassin and tahlil recital at the Sultan Abu Bakar Mosque yesterday.

This morning, Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman attended the Awal Muharam celebration at Kompleks Islam. About 1,000 people attended.

At the function, Datuk Ahmad Arshad was declared the recipient of the State-level Tokoh Ma'al Hijrah award.

Ahmad, who is also the president of the National Smallholders Association of Malaysia, was chosen for his contribution to the development of smallholders in Johor, as well as for his 14-year service as a religious teacher.

In Kuantan, the Sultan of Pahang called on Muslims to practice the culture of hijrah and jemaah as it could strengthen the harmony of family institutions and the community.

He said the spirit of sharing had been shadowed by people more worried about their prosperity and luxury. He said such an attitude should not continue.

Also present were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob, Deputy Menteri Besar Datuk Hasan Arifin, State Education and Religious Affairs Committee chairman Datuk Adnan Yaakob and Pahang State Assembly Speaker Datuk Abdullah Kia.

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