

21/09/1998

Queen E and Prince Philip arrive for visit

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Queen Elizabeth II who flew in today for a four-day state visit, made St Mary's Cathedral her first stop, attending an evensong service there two hours after her arrival in Malaysia.

The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh Prince Philip arrived at the church at 4.15pm in a blue Rolls-Royce as bells tolled in welcome.

They were warmly greeted by diocesan bishop Rev Datuk Dr Lim Cheng Ean, his wife Datin Amy and canon in residence Rev Jason Selvaraj, before entering the church for a 30-minute service with 500 people.

This is the Queen's second visit to the 104-year-old church located opposite Dataran Merdeka. She last visited it in 1989 when Kuala Lumpur hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

British Foreign Minister Robin Cook was also present.

According to the programme, Prince Philip read the first lesson from the Bible before prayers and hymns. The last hymn was sung as the choir walked out in their robes to line the drive.

The Queen walked down the line, stopping to receive a bouquet of flowers from Joellyne Selvaraj, 10. She also spoke to several other children, choir members and some of the congregation.

Before leaving, she presented a silver Armada dish with her crest to the church. Rev Selvaraj who received the gift, said the Queen thanked them for holding the service and said she was very happy to be back.

Hundreds of Malaysians and tourists waiting outside the church for a glimpse, some with cameras, waved enthusiastically as the Queen, dressed in a pink floral dress, pink hat and white gloves, entered her car.

She departed for Carcosa Seri Negara where she met Commonwealth Games gold medallists while the Duke left separately for the National Sports Complex in Bukit Jalil to watch the finals of several events.

The royal couple who arrived at 1.55pm at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, was met at the Bunga Raya complex by Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who is the Minister-in-Attendance, and Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek, who is the Minister-in-Attendance for the Duke of Edinburgh.

They were the first VVIPs to use the RM80 million complex.

The highlight of the Queen's programme is the closing of the Games tomorrow. She will also attend an official welcoming ceremony at Parliament Square, visit the Games Village, watch the athletics finals and meet Games volunteers.

The Queen is also scheduled to open a British exhibition at the Kuala Lumpur City Centre, visit a recording studio, children's home, centre for blind people and a British-Malaysia educational institute.

She will meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and attend a State banquet in her honour hosted by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar.

Prince Philip has a separate programme which includes a visit to Cyberjaya and a nature education centre in Fraser's Hill.

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